

BV
4647
P5Z75E

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation





EXERCISES

OF

PIETY.

[PRICE THREE SHILLINGS, UNBOUND.]

E X E R C I S E S

OF

P I E T Y.

FOR THE USE OF

ENLIGHTENED AND VIRTUOUS CHRISTIANS.

BY

G. J. ZOLLIKOFRE,

PASTOR OF THE REFORMED CHURCH AT LEIPSIC.

Translated from the French Edition,

BY

JAMES MANNING.

PASTOR OF THE UNITED CONGREGATIONS OF DISSEK-
TERS IN EXETER.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

1796.



BV
4647
P5Z75E

ADVERTISEMENT BY THE TRANSLATOR.

THE following Exercifes of Piety are the production of Mr. G. J. Zolikofre, the worthy pafter of the reformed church at Leipfic. They made their firft appearance in the German language, but were lately publifhed in French, at Francfort. The French edition, from which thefe Exercifes were tranflated, is printed in two volumes, of which the devotional fervices, now publifhed, make but an inconfiderable part, and are chiefly taken from the fecond volume.

The enlightened and virtuous Chriftian, for whose ufe they are principally intended, will here find fomewhat exactly fuited to his external circumftances, and the devotional feelings of his mind.

The lefs perfect Chriftian, who has not yet made fuch progrefs in the fchool of Piety as the former, may alfo reap confiderable benefit from fuch a book of devotion. It will tend to improve him in knowledge and practice,

and be a useful book of instruction as well as of devotion. He may here be led to form just notions and holy desires, such as cannot but have considerable influence on his prayers and on his conduct.

The idea of translating them was suggested by reading Dr. Fordyce's *Addresses to the Deity*, to which they appeared to be a proper companion, as they are compositions of the same kind, "a species of pious contemplation, where the soul, inspired by a lively sense of the Divine Presence, expresses, with humility and ardor, her very inmost thoughts, affections and desires, on different subjects."

Mr. Zolikofre has so clearly explained his views in the following Preface, that it appeared highly proper to prefix it to a selection from his work.

THE PREFACE.

EVERY writer, who would not be disappointed of his object, should confine his attention, at the time of composing his work, to some particular class of readers, and never lose sight of their situation and wants.—These Exercises of Piety were drawn up solely for the use of *enlightened* and *virtuous Christians*. As they alone are susceptible of true, and genuine piety, they also are the only persons who can enter thoroughly into the ideas and sentiments which I have endeavoured to express in this book. Persons of this description will, I trust, find nothing here incompatible with their mode of thinking and feeling---nothing but what will more or less interest their understanding and their hearts.

But it is necessary for me to point out, more distinctly, the class of readers I have chiefly had in view throughout this work.

By *enlightened Christians* I understand those who (far from contenting themselves with the imperfect instructions of infancy and early youth, and adopting the doctrines of their several churches, blindly and without examination) reflect on what they have heard, read, and been taught, enquire for themselves, and are continually making new progress in the knowledge of truth. I mean by this term, persons who have been long a prey to doubts, and perplexed with difficulties, but who have at length determined to leave all contested opinions, all those subjects of controversy which have embittered and divided the Christian world, to be settled by those who are fond of disputes, and to be intent on those only which are essential to religion, in which all Christians believe and are agreed; and who endeavour to be more and more established in the conviction of those great and universally interesting truths. Accustomed to reflection, they suspend their
judg-

judgments on things above their comprehension, or not clearly revealed, without suffering this indecision of mind to disturb their peace, or impair their virtue.

By the other term of *virtuous* Christians, I understand those persons who regard Christianity as a system the most important and indispensable to the satisfaction and peace of their minds,—who attend upon, and return to, the Exercises of Devotion, less from a principle of duty than from taste and affection; in whom reason rules over the sensual appetites; in whom the love of God, the love of man, and the love of all that is true, lovely, venerable, and of good report, prevail over every other inclination. I mean, by this expression, such Christians as may indeed suffer themselves to be sometimes deluded, and fall into errors, but who do not voluntarily transgress----who may be occasionally off their guard in the course of virtue,

tue, but who are not entirely unconcerned about their duty, and who, even when they are so unhappy as to transgress, soon return to the good way from which they had strayed. Persons of this character cannot think and speak just as those whose dispositions and inclinations are ungoverned and depraved, who, by the frequent commission of wicked actions, become a constant prey to remorse and fear.

How common soever it may be in books of devotion to consider men in an indiscriminate light, it is not the less incompatible with the spirit and design of Christianity, and the dispositions and conduct of Christians who are both enlightened and virtuous. Those exercises of devotion which have not truth for their basis, cannot be highly estimable in the sight of God, who does not encourage us to entertain a false opinion of our own character, and to declare
our-

ourselves in his presence to be more criminal than we really are.

This mode of thinking may appear to many persons the effect of a blameable pride. But pride hath falshood, and not truth, for its source; and the more enlightened, wise, and virtuous a Christian is, the less is he capable of pride. No one is more ready than such a Christian to acknowledge, that whatever good there is in him proceeds from God. How then can such a person cherish pride? True piety and pride are as inconsistent as light and darkness.

Such are the enlightened and virtuous Christians I have principally had in view, whilst composing these Exercises of Piety.— Though such Christians will not servilely bind themselves to forms, they may occasionally need a guide to assist and animate them in their reflections, and to make this employment more easy to them. We are not always equally disposed for meditation and

prayer—the business and the avocations of life will often deaden the devotional feelings, and throw obstacles in our way. Besides, do we not like to have a friend who shall join with us in honouring God and Jesus Christ, who shall call up our attention to our spiritual wants and common interests; who shall invite us to collect our thoughts, enter into ourselves, and excite those ideas and sentiments, whose truth and comfort we have already often felt.

Would to God I may become such a friend to the greater part of my readers!

If inconsiderate and vicious persons should look into this book, they will soon find sentiments expressed in it to which they are in a great measure strangers: but they will not be able to deny, that the sentiments are fitted to contribute, many ways, to the improvement, tranquillity, and happiness of those who are penetrated with them; and this may be the means of leading them to reflect on them-

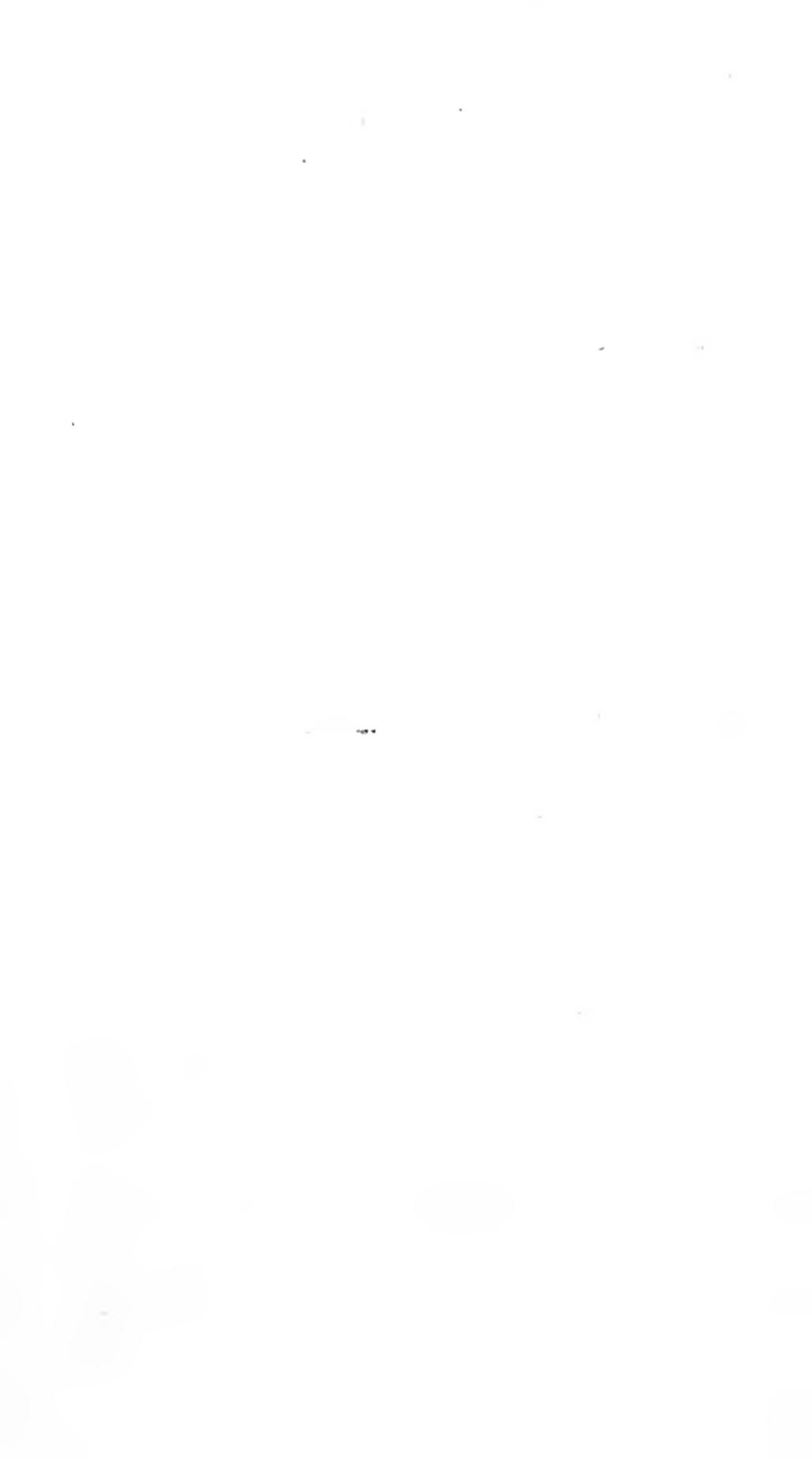
themselves in their moments of retirement and recollection; and to awaken in them, through the grace of God, dispositions more favourable to virtue.

But, that my readers may judge fairly of this book, and use it properly, I beseech them not to forget---that it is written for enlightened and virtuous Christians.

INDEX.

PAGE.

Introduction	1
Reflections on the Existence of God	5
Providence	13
On Faith in Jesus Christ	25
The Immortality of the Soul	36
Love to God	48
Love to Jesus Christ	55
Love to Mankind	62
Love of Labour	73
The safest Rule in the conduct of Life	81
Exercises of Piety suited to the different Relations in do- mestic and civil Society	87
Married Persons	89
Parents	97
Childhood	107
Youth	113
Manhood	122
Old Age	128
Subject	136
Rich Man	142
Poor Man	150
A Person confined by Sicknes	159
Death of Friends	215



EXERCISES OF PIETY :
OR,
MEDITATIONS
ON THE
PRINCIPAL DOCTRINES AND DUTIES OF RELIGION.

REFLECTION is the mother of Wisdom, the faithful companion of Virtue, and the principal source of human felicity. The wisest and most virtuous of men have always considered it in this view, and to this day no one calls in question the truth of the encomium.

But, notwithstanding the acknowledged advantages of reflection, many persons scarcely ever reflect at all; and the greater part of mankind regard this employment as difficult and burthenfome. We *think* continually, and without intermission. Thought is as necessary to the life of the soul as motion is

to that of the body. They are both equally involuntary. It is as impossible entirely to banish thought as to stop the circulation of the blood. The objects which surround us, and the changes which take place within us, are continually making impressions upon us, which the mind presents to itself with more or less distinctness, and which it approves or disapproves. And this operation is performed in sleeping and waking, at rest and in action, in society and in solitude. We never cease, therefore, to *think*, any more than we cease to *breathe*. But we generally think with such rapidity and inattention, that our ideas are effaced as easily as they are produced, and leave no sensible traces behind them.

We often *think*, then, without *reflecting*; and it is seldom we examine with attention what have been our thoughts. Hence arise the little certainty, order, and consistency we observe in our ideas---hence the slight conviction they produce; the inconsistency and fickleness of our opinions and judgments, and the opposition that is often seen between our light and our conduct, our manner of thinking and manner of acting. To remove
these

these defects, it is necessary to habituate ourselves to reflection, and to familiarize our minds to so noble and useful an employment. To reflect, as the very expression intimates, is to throw back the thoughts upon themselves, to return to a thought we have already had, and to think upon it a *second time*. A person who reflects, stops, and fixes upon one idea---considers it at leisure, and with attention---analyzes it in order to discover, more distinctly, the nature of the object on which he meditates, to trace it in its causes and effects, and to draw consequences from it relating to his conduct and happiness.

It is by means of such reflection our ideas, and the knowledge we have acquired, become more clear, compleat, certain, interesting, and useful to us: and such will be the daily employment of every one who zealously aspires after wisdom, virtue, and happiness.

Properly speaking, there is no subject upon which we cannot reflect. The field of contemplation is immense. The heavens and the earth, creatures animate and inanimate;

the present and the future—every thing invites to reflection; and happy is that man, whose faculties of mind, and whose leisure, permit him to meditate on all the variety of objects around him, and to taste the pleasures of reflection, to the greatest extent. But this can be only the privilege of a few; it therefore becomes necessary for us to make a judicious selection, and choice of subjects on which to fix our attention; for every exercise of reflection cannot be equally necessary and useful for us.

What then are the objects which it most concerns us to be acquainted with, and what are the subjects on which it chiefly concerns us to reflect?

If we would fix our attention on subjects which are most interesting, we must reflect on the existence and providence of God, on Jesus Christ and christianity, on the immortality of the soul, and a future state of retribution.

REFLECTIONS
ON THE
EXISTENCE OF GOD.

WHAT is the eternal and inexhaustible source, whence flow the streams of light and life, which diffuse themselves over all worlds, and all the orders of beings which inhabit them? What is the universal and incessantly active principle which animates and gives life to all, from which the powers of nature proceed, and which continually renews them?

Where is the first cause of all that I behold? I see nothing around me but effects which owe their origin to other effects.—Every thing is produced by another, and is itself produced in its turn by others. All things are connected and linked together.—Does not this connection necessarily lead me up to a first cause, eternal, independent, self-existent; who always did, and always will, continue to exist? Where is the first link of

this immense chain, and the Almighty Hand that holds it?

Can I doubt that this first cause is infinitely wise, intelligent and good? Do I not every where see the sensible and striking traces of intelligence, wisdom, and benevolence—the appearances of order, harmony, beauty, design, and means proper to execute those designs? Who hath assigned to the sun, the moon, the stars, and all those thousands of worlds with which I am surrounded, the places they occupy, and the circles they run? Who hath so magnificently adorned the place of my abode, and spread so much life and pleasure amongst its inhabitants? What a variety and multitude of plants, insects, and animals, cover the face of the globe, all of which, by their structure, their instincts, their modes of life, their labours, and their relation to each other, proclaim the consummate ability, and perfect wisdom, of Him who created them! How wonderful the manner in which they multiply themselves from age to age, without ever altering or confounding their species! Must I not do violence to my understanding, to consider all this as the

effect of chance, or of a blind and unintelligent cause?

And where is the first, supreme intelligence, the Father of Spirits, who hath created me, and all other thinking and reasonable creatures? For I have not always thought. I have existed but a short time, and am equally ignorant how I think, and how I began to think. I am sensible it is not in myself that I must seek for the true cause of my existence. It is not to the immediate authors I am indebted for it. They know not how I exist, and the cause of their own existence is no more in themselves than mine is in me. Every thing informs me also, that my intelligent nature cannot be the work of chance, the effect of the sensible objects which surround me, or of the gross materials to which I am united. The order, the connection, and the harmony which prevail in my thoughts, will not suffer me to believe it. I cannot but observe, that my mind is of a much nobler origin, and is of a nature far superior to the body which serves for its covering. I perceive that my soul is the work of a Being superior to all those which I see around me---

that it proceeds from an immaterial, intelligent principle, by whom it lives and thinks, and to whom it is most intimately related.

To believe that there is a first, eternal cause of all things, an intelligence supreme and perfect, is to admit a truth, the conviction of which is necessary to relieve and tranquillize my heart; and the clearer my ideas on this subject, and the more attention I pay to what passes within and without me, the more clearly I hear the voice of nature, which announces to me a Deity.

O thou Being of Beings, infinite, eternal, heaven and earth proclaim thy existence!—every leaf, every plant, every tree, every insect, every worm that crawleth on the ground, every living and rational creature speaks of Thee. Every thing that exists and thinks celebrates thy praise. I behold Thee in the brightness of the firmament---in the mild light which surrounds, and in the vital heat which pervades all animate beings! It is Thee I hear in the soft murmurs of the air, in the salutary blowing of the winds, in the rustling noise of the leaves, in the melodious song of birds, in the intelligible language of
men,

men, in the roaring waves of the sea, and in the thundering voice of the tempest. It is Thee whom I perceive in the impressions which external objects make upon me, and in the pleasing, and sometimes rapturous feelings which arise from the knowledge of truth, the practice of virtue, and the expectation of a happy futurity.

All that exist, live, think, and act, inform me there is a God, an universal principle, an eternal source of life, motion and thought. Yes, great God! thou wast, and art, and art to come, from everlasting, and to everlasting.

How happy am I in knowing Thee, and in being able, on the wings of thought, to elevate myself to Thee! What would the whole world be without Thee?—a confused, inexplicable mystery. Our intelligent minds would be involved in frightful darkness, and all our thoughts, knowledge, actions and enjoyments, would lose all their charms, together with all their use. If all were but the sport of chance, what hopes could we cherish in our bosoms; to what fears should we not become the prey? On what could we, with any confidence, rely? What principles could
safely

safely guide us in the search of truth, and in the conduct of life ?

If I did not know that thou, O God, dost exist, I could scarce restrain myself from envying the brutes. In this case, the power of thinking, and of ascending from effect to cause, would be to me a fatal present, and life a burthen. No—it is such a Being as thyself alone which could give me a mind capable of conceiving of Thee, and a heart burning with desire to know Thee, without whom I can enjoy no true felicity.

By believing in *thy* existence, I perceive the whole value of my *own*. The idea that I am, that I think and live, and that I owe these advantages to Thee, fills me with joy unspeakable. I am no longer an unconnected individual, lost amidst the multitude of living beings—I am no longer an effect without a cause. I am the workmanship of sovereign wisdom and benevolence, the creature of Him who hath created, and who preserves all beings, and all worlds; the child of the common parent, of the immense family which fills the heavens and the earth.

Yes,

Yes, O my God, little as I appear in comparison with the vast universe, I am as much thy work as the sun, and all the worlds which revolve in the immensity of space. I am as much thy child as the most exalted intelligences which encircle thy throne. To thine eyes, thou eternal and infinite Being, all the distinctions which are made by men between what they call great and little, disappear. All that comes out of thine hands is worthy of Thee, and bears the impress of thy infinite wisdom and power.

What a light is now reflected on all things around me. All is good and perfect in its kind. Every thing is what it ought to be in the place it occupies, and according to its design, for all that exists is the work of the wisest, and the best of Beings. The universe is an immense whole, all whose parts, closely connected together, promote the wisest and most important ends.

What contentment and tranquillity now reign in my heart? I know the object of my faith and hope. I know from whence I came, by whom I exist, in whom I may rejoice, and on whom I can rely. I know that thou livest,
O my

O my God ; that thou art my Creator and my Father, and the Creator and Father of all men, and of all beings, and will be for ever. May nothing ever deprive me of this lively and delightful conviction.-----Father of Mercies ! strengthen and encrease my faith. May I be daily more and more convinced of thine existence, and adorable perfections ; and, filled with this idea, may it become to me a constant source of happiness !

ON

PROVIDENCE.

IF God exists---and can I doubt of it whilst the heavens and the earth, all that is within me and without me, proclaims this truth? ---If there is a first eternal cause, a Creator of the universe, there is also a Providence which preserves, governs, and directs the several creatures to their respective ends, and to a perpetually encreasing perfection and felicity.

The idea I form to myself of the Supreme Being necessarily convinces me of the truth of this doctrine; and what falls under my notice of the frame and constitution of all things confirms my faith in it.

How can he who knows all things be ignorant of what passes in any part of his vast dominions? Must he not know the qualities, the abilities, the effects, the combinations of his creatures, animate as well as inanimate?

inanimate? Must he not know exactly their wants, their situation, their wishes, their endeavours? Are they not all in his hands? Can any thing exist, live, be happy, or unhappy, without his will or permission? Do not all the powers of nature proceed from Him who is the eternal and inexhaustible source of motion and of life; from Him who is the Father of our spirits, and the God of the spirits of all flesh? And can I believe that God, despising the work of his hand, will abandon his children to the caprice of chance, and to the weakness of nature? Can I think a Being of perfect benevolence can be an indifferent spectator of the series of events, and insensible to the happiness and misery of his creatures; that eternal wisdom acts without an end, or cannot attain the end it proposes; or that Infinite Goodness will not do all the good that is in its power?

I need not be surpris'd if the princes of the earth neglect the people over whom they are placed, if their measures are not always wise, or their administrations free from reproach; and if, with the best intentions, they

they frequently commit the greatest faults. Sometimes they are deficient in understanding and knowledge, at others in power or benevolence. Sometimes they are misled by error, at other times they are blinded by passion; and they almost always sink under the burden that overpowers them. Their feeble sight cannot take in so large a field at once; and neither their heads nor their hearts are equal to so many objects. But the eye of the Supreme takes in all things at one view. His understanding is infinite; his love and paternal kindness are boundless. He cannot be deceived by false appearances—to him nothing is difficult; his strength is never weakened, and there is no place which his arm cannot reach. He sees all things as they really are. The material and spiritual worlds are equally subjected to him. He speaks and it is done; he commands and it stands fast. He doeth whatsoever he pleaseth in heaven and earth. No one can stay his hand, and say unto him, What doest thou? We have every reason to be satisfied that it is infinite wisdom, power, and goodness which preserve, direct, and govern the world;

world; all things proceed from him, all things exist by him and for him. The perfections of the Divine Nature prove this delightful and important doctrine; and what falls under our notice of the frame and constitution of the world, establishes it beyond all uncertainty and doubt.

Are not we, and all that furrounds us, as feeble and dependent this day as we were the former? Are we not as incapable of prolonging our existence for a single moment as we were of giving ourselves existence at first? Can that which is dependent become independent, and subsist by itself? Can the brook continue to run without its source, or the weak and feeble infant support itself without the tender care of its mother? Is it not necessary that the Almighty Will, which gave us our being, should be continually exerted to prevent our sinking into our original nothingness? Yes, Oh my God! every thing convinces me that my faculties, my station, and the duration of my existence do not depend on my will. It is thou who by a secret and absolute power maintainest my strength, motion and existence. If my breath is not stopped---if my
blood

blood circulates—if my limbs have not lost their activity—if the organ of my senses have preserved their delicacy—if in this instant I have the faculty of thinking, and the use of my reason, it is to Thee alone that I am indebted for this continued blessing. These expressions in thy holy word then are as true as they are beautiful. “All thy creatures wait upon thee, and thou givest them their meat in due season—that thou givest them they gather; thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good; thou hidest thy face, they are troubled; thou takest away their breath, they die and return to their dust; thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth.”

What does the invariable order which reigns in nature teach me; the regular and constant course of the stars, the wonderful harmony of their motions, notwithstanding their innumerable multitude, and the difference of their magnitude? What does the continual and well-regulated succession of days, and seed-time, and harvest, and the inexhaustible fertility of nature teach me? Of what am I informed by the unchangable
C relations

relations which subsist between the different kinds of plants, animals, and men ; and by the exact proportion which takes place between life and death, between what is destructive and preservative, between the means and the end. If chance, or a blind necessity, could not produce this surprizing and harmonious order, neither could they preserve and maintain it. Such constant regularity can only be the effect of an ever-active Intelligence, which embraces and actuates all.

Great God ! I humbly prostrate myself before Thee. Thou art the sovereign lord of the universe, and great disposer of events ; the preserver and father of all thy creatures. This is what all nature proclaims to me ; but thy son, Jesus Christ, hath more especially taught me to consider Thee under these glorious and consolatory relations. It is in Thee, my God, I live, and move, and have my being. If thou suspendest thine influence I languish, if thou takest away my breath, I die. Thou hast assigned to every one the place he occupies in thy kingdom, and hast determined the number of his days. Thou knowest all my wants, and thou providest for them with a wisdom and liberality truly

truly paternal. Thou perceivest all our thoughts, thou hearest all our sighs, and thou weighest all our actions. Thou discoverest all the most secret wishes that are formed in our hearts, and there is nothing so concealed as to be unseen by Thee. Thou dwellest in light, and all is light in thine eyes. The darkest night is the same to Thee as the brightest day; the obscurity of the grave is to Thee as the splendour of the firmament. Thou art the ever-present eternal life, whose vital energy and power animate and pervade the whole universe. In the heavens and in the earth, in every being, in every intelligence, and in the heart of man we perceive the constant agency of Thee, the omnipotent Jehovah, of whom, and through whom, and for whom are all things; to whom be glory for ever.

Thou neglectest nothing in thy vast empire; thou takest care of the smallest as well as the greatest of thy works, of the parts as well as the whole. All are thy works, all are equally present to thy spirit, all are closely bound and subjected to thy laws. All are perfect in their kind, all contribute to

promote the greatest possible perfection and happiness in the universe. It is thou that cloathest the flowers in all their magnificence ; thou givest to the beast his food, and the young ravens which cry. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without thy permission. Thou preservest and guidest the worm that crawleth on the ground, and the sun which shines in the firmament ; the frail children of the earth, and the sublime inhabitants of heaven.

How low soever be the rank we sustain among rational creatures, this does not prevent thee from being our Father, and from watching continually for our preservation and happiness. Nothing can befall us which thou hast not foreseen, and which hath not made a part of thy plan as a cause or an effect. Thou upholdest all that fall, and raisest up all those that be bowed down ; thou makest poor, and thou makest rich ; thou killest, and thou makest alive ; thou woundest, and thou healest, neither is there any that can deliver out of thine hand : the very hairs of thy servants heads are numbered by Thee. Thou determinest our destiny, and the fate
of

of kingdoms and of worlds, and all that thou orderest is righteous and good.

However great the plans, and however exalted the ends of thy providence, thou wilt not fail to execute the one and attain the other. How opposite soever the powers of nature may appear, how contradictory soever the wishes, thoughts, designs, and endeavours of men, what thou hast resolved on shall take place, thy will shall be accomplished; and from all these contradictions, real or apparent, the most perfect harmony shall finally result.

How happy should I esteem myself in being the object of the wise care and attention of the best and most tender of fathers. How happy is it for me that I am not left to myself, to the weakness of nature and the extravagance of passions; that my fate is not governed by my childish and senseless wishes, but by the laws of thine adorable wisdom; that it is thou, a being of infinite knowledge and goodness, who governest and directest my lot, and not myself, a weak and blind mortal.

With what calm fearlessness can I now contemplate the most extraordinary and frightful revolutions in nature and in society! With what firm assurance can I look forward to all future events! I know that thine hand directs every event, and that nothing can take place without thy sovereign will.

With filial confidence I commit into thy paternal hands my lot in life, and all that shall befall me. Foolish and thoughtless should I be to presume to prescribe to Thee the manner in which Thou shouldst regulate my lot, the lot of my friends, or of all thy children spread over the face of the earth. Thou knowest and Thou lovest us all better than we do ourselves. Thou alone knowest, with certainty, what would be proper for each of us in our respective stations and our several relations. Little doth it signify whether the path by which thou conductest us be obscure or light, troublesome or easy, so long as it leads us to perfection and happiness. This consideration alone should compose my mind, and make me say, with resignation, in all imaginable cases—"It is
the

the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.”

It is true thy thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor thy ways as our ways. Our views are bounded by a small circle of objects, and we behold but a small part of the universe. But thou takest in at one view, all times and all places; all that is possible, and all that really exists, the past as well as the most distant futurity. Thou seest at one glance of thine eye the immense chain of causes and effects in all ages and in all worlds. What we consider as ends, are often no more than means to attain more important ends. What we regard as evil is often only a preservative from evil, much more considerable, and even a fruitful source of new blessings.

Far, then, from permitting the least murmur against the unsearchable ways of Providence, I put my hand upon my mouth and say—Father, not as I will but as thou wilt. The time is coming when my faith shall be turned into sight: then shall I be enlightened with heavenly light: then what I here saw through a glass darkly shall be

perfectly revealed. Though clouds and darkness are now round about the proceedings of the Most High, I shall then see, without an intervening cloud, thy sublime designs, the wisdom of the means by which they were accomplished, and their connection with my happy lot. Then I shall sing, with all glorified spirits, Hallelujah—the Lord God omnipotent reigneth—All that the Lord hath done is good—Praise ye the Lord!

ON

FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST.

IT is a true and faithful saying, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. The dignity of his character, the beneficence and innocence of his life, the sublime and consolatory nature of his doctrines, the disinterested manner in which he and his apostles taught them to mankind, the remarkable and unheard of treatment which Jesus met with, his death and resurrection, the happy change which his religion produced in the world—these are so many plain and well-known facts, resting on evidence which must be more than sufficient to obtain for them an entire credit and a fixed belief. And this belief is absolutely necessary for those who earnestly long for the knowledge of truth, and a satisfactory assurance on points the most important; and who earnestly desire to be

be

be confirmed in virtue, and enjoy a durable tranquillity.

How deplorable was the condition of the human race before Jesus Christ brought into the world the light of truth! How many errors were embraced even by the wisest and most enlightened of mankind! From what source could they derive that steady conviction, that firm assurance, that solid peace, those exalted hopes, that delightful confidence in God which are the portion of the Christian. The most absurd idolatries and superstitious customs, the most dangerous incredulity and scepticism, the grossest sensuality, the most dreadful misery and despair, had extended on all sides their dominion over the earth. And who will venture to deny, that the doctrine of Jesus Christ hath produced in these respects the greatest and happiest revolution in the world: a change which all the wishes and all the efforts of the heathen philosophers could not effect?

Is it not Jesus who hath marked out and cleared the path of truth, of virtue, and of happiness, which so many mortals sought before him but could never find? How many

many thousands and millions of men have arrived by this path into that firm persuasion, that precious liberty, that noble conquest over themselves---to that sweet peace of mind, to that contentment and internal felicity after which they had so long aspired. How many are there at the present day who walk with a serene mind and an unshaken confidence in this road, and approach nearer and nearer to perfection. Is it not now much easier for mankind to improve themselves, to attend to the voice of nature, to consult their reason, and to avoid, by the light of this heavenly torch, the dark and crooked paths into which men formerly wandered?

How much am I myself indebted to the christian doctrine! And how much happier may I not yet become by its assistance? I am brought acquainted with God---I know that he is my father, the only living and true God; a Being eternal, infinitely wise and good; the Creator, Preserver, and Governor of all things; the King of heaven and earth. I know that he is merciful and kind, even to the greatest of sinners; and
when

when they repent and amend, will forgive their sins and receive them into his favour. I know that my soul is immortal, and that after the present life a more perfect and happy state, a state of retribution, awaits me. But I should have been unacquainted with all these things, how agreeable soever I now find them to the light of reason, or I should have known them but imperfectly, if Jesus Christ had not revealed them to mankind by commission from his Father. And how could I be so serene and happy as I now am if I had been ignorant of these doctrines, or called in question their certainty and truth. Do they not spread a cheering light on all my being, and on all the events of my life? Do they not give more stability, a better foundation, and a greater importance to my thoughts, principles, and actions? and if I obey the precepts of Jesus, if I imitate his example, if I am animated by his spirit, how wise, good, peaceful, and happy shall I become? How easy will the practice of my duty be to me? It will then cost me but little to gain the conquest of myself, and to live and die contented. With what zeal shall

shall I do good; what peace will reign in my heart; what agreement and harmony in my sentiments, inclinations, and conduct? With what joy shall I think of God; with what feelings of benevolence and charity shall I regard my fellow-creatures; with what noble confidence shall I look forward to death and an eternal world?

And shall I yet doubt, after all that my experience teaches me, whether this doctrine come from God, the Father of light, the Author and source of all happiness? Shall I still doubt whether it be the safest and the shortest road to perfection and felicity? Shall I not embrace, with a lively faith, a religion which in all respects bears the evident marks of a celestial origin, and which must appear so desirable to every man whose mind is free from prejudice, and whose heart is uncorrupted---a religion which is so necessary to my tranquillity and peace? Shall I not regard it as the most precious gift of Heaven to mankind? Shall I not acknowledge Jesus to be the organ of truth, the most generous and powerful Saviour that God hath sent into the world, the greatest Benefactor of humanity?

humanity? And shall I not testify the sincerest gratitude for all that he hath undertaken and suffered for us? Shall I not obey him with my whole heart? Shall I not cheerfully follow his steps, and endeavour more and more to resemble him, that I may be exalted to the same glory and felicity he enjoys in Heaven? Nothing shall deprive me of so sublime and comfortable a belief. Nothing can lessen the respect and love I bear to Jesus. I find too much light, encouragement in virtue, peace and happiness in the christian religion, ever to induce me to forsake it, or to give the preference to any system of human wisdom, whatever it may be; in which I should vainly seek for such important advantages. The system of Christianity shall not be to me a system of speculation, a barren theory, a mere external distinction, much less a subject of controversy, dispute, and division between me and my brethren; but it shall be the constant rule of my conduct, a principle of action, my instructor and guide.

Let the unbeliever, then, raise a multitude of difficulties and objections against religion.

They are nothing to me, who am attached only to what is essential to Christianity, and who know by experience how proper this system is to make me both happier and better. They can embarrass those only who make of Christianity a complicated system, incomprehensible and contradictory, from scholastic subtleties and distinctions. As for me, to know the only true God and Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent, to honour God as my Father, and Jesus Christ as my Saviour and Master; to be persuaded of the mercy of God to men, of his universal providence, of his protection and indulgence; to cherish the certain hope that by walking in the paths of virtue, and even of an imperfect and defective virtue, I shall attain to an eternal felicity---This is my Christianity. The more plain and simple it is, and the more agreeable to reason, the less hath it to fear from the assaults of the unbeliever, and the better is it able to sustain and to repel them.

It is no less true that Christianity hath been often abused, or rather what hath been
falsely

falsely called Christianity, and that it is still abused. But what is there in the natural or moral world, what gift of God is there that mankind have not abused, and made subservient to the worst designs? God gave religion as he gave the earth to man, that in peace and comfort he might cultivate and reap the fruits of it. Instead of so doing, man lays it waste and drenches it in blood. Can we blame God, or the earth, or religion? No—to man alone the blame is due, on him alone let it then be laid.

It is also true that Christianity has not produced all that might be expected from it. It was foreknown, it was foretold that it would not. Nothing has fallen out new; nothing contrary to the expectations of its divine Author and his servants. Christianity would have all men to be temperate, industrious, meek, peaceable, just, loving; in which case Paradise would again spring up among us, and earth would be a lively image of Heaven.

Christianity hath not produced all the good effects that may be expected from it.

But

But what good may it not yet effect in the course of time; either directly, in spreading its peculiar truths, or indirectly, in confirming and clearing those of reason? If the ill use which hath been hitherto made of it hath produced great evils in the world, the time is coming when this abuse of it shall entirely cease. And who can estimate all the salutary effects that the Christian religion, better understood, and more faithfully obeyed, will produce in all the future ages of the world?

O God, who art the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, accept my praises and thanksgivings for having called me to the knowledge of the Gospel, and for disclosing to me, in the Christian doctrine, so much light, encouragement, consolation, and happiness. Every good and perfect gift cometh down from above, from the Father of Lights, and consequently Christianity---which imparts to us such just and certain knowledge of thy nature and will; which inspires such perfect confidence in thy paternal bounty; which gives us the assurance of thy grace and mercy; which frees us from all superstitious

and fervile fear; which communicates such elevated sentiments, such a glorious liberty, and which raises us to the sublime hope of immortality. Christianity, which is the greatest of all blessings, and the most perfect of all thy gifts, can proceed from Thee alone. The salutary effects it produces, sufficiently prove its celestial origin; and the nature of the benefit is sufficient to make known to us the benefactor. So pure a stream, from which we draw such comfort and support, can only be derived from a divine source. Yes, it is at this fountain of living waters that I can quench my thirst, and draw the knowledge of truth, wisdom, virtue, and happiness. May no tormenting doubts, no tumultuous passions ever disturb so pure a spring, and make me distaste these wholesome waters of life! The most ardent wish of my heart, O my God, shall be to deserve, by my conduct, the title of Christian; to feel, more and more, the power of the Gospel; to enjoy its privileges with gratitude; to distinguish myself from unbelievers by wisdom and virtue, the serenity and peace of my mind, and by these means

to recommend the Gospel to their esteem and regard. Condescend to favour my wishes by thy wife and good providence. Strengthen my faith in this heavenly doctrine; and may this faith become a more active principle, and more fruitful of good works. Let the kingdom of the Messiah be extended and enlarged throughout the earth. Let Christianity be purified from all human inventions, and let its salutary influence be every day more powerfully and universally experienced.

ON THE
IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL.

ENLIGHTENED by the Gospel, I have already learnt to think and reason with more clearness and precision on this important doctrine. When a person has once got into the path of truth, it becomes easy for him to advance and pass on from one truth to another. The ideas which the Christian religion has given me of God, of his infinite perfections, of his eternal love to men, of his mode of governing moral agents, of his will and designs; all these considerations lead me to entertain the hope of immortality. The Gospel raises this hope to the highest degree of certainty. Reason and scripture unite to confirm this delightful doctrine.

With a little reflection I can easily satisfy myself, that what thinks within me---that my mind is of a nature totally different from my body---that it is a principle directed, not by mechanical,

mechanical, but by moral laws. I think--- but I can, without any external imprefſion, interrupt or continue my thoughts, divert them into another channel, or fix them upon any particular ſubje&ct that pleaſes me. I put my body in motion ; but I can, without any external obſtacle, ſtop this motion, and give it an oppoſite direction. I exerciſe my will, and my will alone moves a multitude of bodies, in a great variety of ways. I communicate my thoughts to beings like myſelf, and by this means I can regulate their thoughts, and influence their opinions, deſigns, and actions, without the leaſt infringement on their liberty. No mere body can act in this manner, and thus raiſe itſelf above the laws of mechanifm.

That which thinks within me, then, is ſomewhat totally different from my body. I can loſe a conſiderable part of my body without loſing one of my ideas. My body is perpetually changing and renewing, nevertheleſs I always retain the ſenſe of my exiſtence, and of my identity. How intimately connected ſoever my body and my mind may be, it does not follow that the latter may not exiſt

without the former, and that the destruction of the body will necessarily draw after it that of the soul. Far from it. The nature of my soul is so different, and so superior, that I am persuaded that it will not perish with the body, but exist after the body is dead.

The consideration of my mental faculties, my present situation, and the relations in which I stand, greatly confirm this belief. I observe, in myself and others, the precious seeds of a multitude of excellent qualities, and exalted powers, which are capable of perpetually unfolding and enlarging their activity, and which yet are incapable of being fully unfolded and expanded in the present state. To what narrow bounds are the faculties of my soul confined by the continual wants and occupations of life. How often do these things hinder me from making that progress which I could wish in the knowledge of truth, the practice of virtue, and the road to happiness. The daily labourer, the mechanic, the manufacturer, have they not souls endued with the same faculties with the statesman to whom the welfare of a nation is entrusted, or with the man of learning versed in the sublimest

limeft sciences? Would not the former, placed
 in the fame circumftances with the latter,
 be equally capable of the fame attainments?
 And where is the human mind which hath
 received all the cultivation of which it is fuf-
 ceptible, and which would not unfold ftill
 more in more favourable fituations? And is
 it poffible that fo many noble powers fhould
 remain for ever concealed, and never arrive
 at all the improvement of which they are
 capable?---No---In the government of a Being
 infinitely wife, there can be no fuch difpro-
 portion between the caufe and the effect,
 the means and the end. Every one of my
 faculties, then, is a proof and a pledge of my
 future exiftence, and of the great things
 which at fome future period I fhall be able
 to perform for myfelf and my brethren.---
 Every thing informs me that my prefent ftate
 is a fcene of trial and difcipline---that in this
 world I do not attain the end for which I was
 formed. Born into the world without know-
 ledge, I muft inceffantly labour to inform my
 mind, and I have never finished learning. It
 is not without troublefome exertion that I
 acquire a facility of employing the powers of

my mind. I instruct myself, and scarcely have I begun to improve my faculties, scarcely have I discovered the footsteps of truth, before I am obliged to leave this profitable school. I cultivate my talents, I become able to distinguish reality and appearance, good and evil, happiness and misery; and scarcely have I begun to enjoy the advantages my knowledge procures me, before it all vanishes from before my eyes. Is it to no purpose, then, that I have informed my mind, and exercised my abilities? Can I never make use of the knowledge I have acquired, and the faculties I have cultivated, with so much care? Shall I never reap the fruits of my labour and pains? Why all this provision, these many and troublesome preparations, if it lead to no end? Can such a useless profusion exist under the government of an infinitely wise God? Do not the schools in which youth are educated previously suppose a state of society in which they are hereafter to be usefully employed? Is it to be imagined that a race of creatures thus furnished and fitted out, should vanish like bubbles in a storm? Can I believe that God alone acts without an end, and with-

out

out a plan ; or, that he is incapable of accomplishing the end he proposes to himself? No---if it be evident that all I see below resembles the means, rather than the end ; if all is rather begun than finished ; if it be certain that I live in a state of trial and discipline ; it is no less clear that God will raise me, after this short life, to a more perfect state, in which I shall make use of all my faculties and talents, and attain the perfection for which he prepares me in this school of discipline.

What chearful prospects open to my view, when I think on the relations in which I stand to God, and on the happiness to be derived from union with the Divinity. I earnestly desire better to know my God, and to be more intimately united to my Creator, and more and more to resemble him. And will God annihilate a Being animated with such desires, who burns with love to him, and wishes to love him eternally? Will he annihilate a child whom he has rendered capable of knowing, and of loving him, and to whom he hath given so many proofs of paternal tenderness?

derness? No—he is my father, and hath already done too much for me to harbour a fear that he will ever abandon me, or cease to do me good. He will not leave his work imperfect. He alone could inspire me with the ardent desire of uniting myself to him; and, as he is truth itself, he cannot fail to satisfy it.

But I am a Christian, and I have on this head the most positive promises from God, which entirely remove every doubt. Life and immortality are the consoling truths which my Saviour brought from Heaven. To confirm them he died on the cross, and rose from the dead. As surely as Jesus Christ was dead and rose to life again, so certain is it that my soul shall live, and rise eternally, from one degree of improvement and happiness to another.

How happy am I in knowing the Gospel—because he lives I shall live also. Where he is there shall his follower be—the more I imitate him on earth, the more shall I resemble him in heaven. Yes, I am immortal. The present is properly but the infancy of my being.

being. It is merely preparatory for, and introductory to, a higher and happier state of existence.

O thou Eternal Source of being and of life, accept of my sincere and devout thanksgivings, for raising me to this reviving and sublime hope, and for giving me the fullest evidence of its truth, by thy son Jesus Christ. He is, in truth, the Resurrection and the Life. He hath brought life and immortality to light by his Gospel. He hath conquered death, and dissipated the fears and terrors it inspired.

How delightful is it now, for me to think of thee, O my God, and of the relations in which I stand to thee! Now I can hope to pass continually from one immense theatre of thy power to another, to be perpetually discovering new traces of wisdom and goodness, and to be eternally employed in admiring the works of thy hands.

A new and ravishing prospect opens to my eyes; a scene of more noble employments, purer pleasures, and a felicity better suited to my desires and faculties. Here below I see
things

things through a glass, darkly; there I shall see things as they really are. Here I exert my powers but in feeble endeavours; there I shall exercise them with the most certain and happy effect. Here I think and act like a child—I judge, I rejoice, and afflict myself like a child; there, arrived at maturity, I shall think and act as a perfect man. If my knowledge be at present confined within narrow bounds, I will not be distressed. I go shortly into an eternal world, where I shall make continual improvements in the knowledge of truth.—The book of nature shall not always be a book which I cannot read; nor the Temple of Truth be always so inaccessible as I at present find it. I go to a world where I shall learn better to read the one and penetrate the other. How intimately is the present scene connected with the future! All that I think, all that I do, all that actually befalls me, has an influence on my eternal destiny. Now I sow. One day I shall reap. Now I labour, endure and suffer. One day I shall gather the fruit of my toils, and be recompensed for my sufferings. Now I prepare for enjoyment. One day I shall be put in possession. This

is

is the time of trial and discipline---that of retribution shall soon arrive. And shall I confine all my thoughts to the present moment? Shall I choose and seek for nothing but what will produce an immediate gratification? Shall I be unconcerned about eternity? No---oh my God, I would live as becomes my celestial destination, and think and act as an immortal creature.

Oh my God! what is man---what am I, that thou shouldst condescend to render me capable of eternal felicity! O may the idea of the dignity of my nature, the nobleness of my origin, and the grandeur of my destination, be never effaced from my mind. Never will I forget that I am created in thy image, and that I am thy child. Never will I degrade my nature, and become the willing slave of sin and vice. Assist me, O Heavenly Father, and let thy spirit sustain and strengthen mine, that, properly estimating the advantages I enjoy, I may learn rightly to improve them, and thus become happier through eternity.

Let

Let my body wither like the flower of the field, and return to the dust, from whence it was taken. It is a coarse covering which I resign to corruption without regret. My mind, incorruptible, shall rise above the dust, and return to God who gave it. I shall one day be cloathed with a more perfect and durable covering—a glorious and celestial body, resembling that of Jesus.

My days now fly away with rapidity, and my life disappears as a fleeting dream. But what are a few days, and months, and years—what is the whole life of man to one who perceives himself to be immortal, and who is hastening to eternity?

No—neither death nor the grave can alarm or frighten me. O God, who hast formed my mind, and made it capable of rising and still rising in the scale of being towards Thyself, Thou wilt not leave my soul in the grave.—Death is only a passage to a better life.—Whether it come this day or the next, I will commit my departing spirit into thy hands.—If I die, O my God, thou wilt receive me unto thyself. By death thou wilt bring
thy

thy child from labour to repose, from combat to victory, and from the age of infancy to manhood. Sublime hopes—delightful prospects, be ye always present to my mind.

EXERCISES OF PIETY,
 OR,
 MEDITATIONS
 ON THE
 PRINCIPAL VIRTUES.

ON
 LOVE TO GOD.

O GOD, thou art love itself! The book of nature, and the book of revelation teach this truth; and my heart---that heart which thou hast formed to love Thee, and which thou hast made capable of tasting this exquisite pleasure---will not permit me to doubt it.

Where is the being that is more excellent, more venerable, more amiable than my God?

Doft

Dost thou not comprize in thyself whatever is beautiful, good, and perfect? Art thou not the origin and source of all the variety of beauties and perfections that are dispersed throughout the earth? All that is great and amiable unite in Thee. To will, and to do good—this is thy divine essence. Thou regardest all the beings thou hast formed with paternal affection. They are all thy children; and, however great or small the degree of perfection they have attained, thou lovest them all, thou takest care of them, thou doest them good, and wilt do it eternally. Having designed them for happiness, thou wilt conduct them into the path which leads to it. All that comes from Thee, thou Supreme Good! all that proceeds from thy hand, good and evil, pleasure and pain, prosperity and adversity, rewards and punishments, favours and chastisements, all tend to promote our felicity, all are adapted to exalt us to greater perfection. It is Thou who pourest forth the streams of light, life, joy, and happiness through all the different parts of thy immense dominions.

E

I myself

I myself, who am so inconsiderable a creature, who am as nothing when compared with the rest of thy creation, I can every moment draw comfort from this inexhaustible source. In what intimate relations do I stand to Thee? Thou art my Creator—I am the work of thy hands. Thou art my Sovereign, and I am thy subject. Thou art my Father, and I am thy child. Can I be connected with Thee by stronger and more endearing ties? Can any thing give a juster claim to all the affections of my heart than these natural and indissoluble relations give? And art thou not the kindest, the most bountiful, the tenderest and most affectionate Father? Am I not indebted to Thee for life and breath, and all things? Amidst the multitude of beings thou hast created I shall not be overlooked. Thou seest all things, and from Thee nothing can be hid. Thou watchest over me with as much care and attention as in the preservation of the worlds with which thou hast filled the universe.

How various and great are the gifts and benefits which thou hast heaped upon me,
and

and which thou still continuest to bestow! All that I am, all that I have, all that I am capable of being, is the effect of thy munificence. Thy bounty provides for the wants of my body and my soul. With how many advantages, comforts, pleasures, and joys hast thou strewed my path? What assistance dost thou grant to my weakness, with what indulgence dost thou bear with my sins, and with what tender sollicitude dost thou recal me from my wanderings. With what wisdom dost thou conduct and direct my lot, and all that shall befall me. If sometimes thou opposest the accomplishment of my foolish wishes, thou wilt never fail to bestow upon me all the blessings I stand in need of, even when I do not desire or ask them.

But how can I speak of the unmerited and inestimable tokens of thy love which Thou hast given me by Jesus Christ, through whom thou hast taught me to hope for the forgiveness of sins, the aids of thy spirit, and everlasting life.

Yes, O my God, thou art essentially bountiful and good, and wilt be so for ever.

I find myself as much furrounded with thy mercies as I am with the light which shines around me. I have daily experience, that to do good and to bless is thy eternal employment.

And shall I not love Thee with all my heart, and soul, and mind, and strength? Shall not the idea of thy existence and amiable attributes become the most natural, and most delightful and consoling idea I am capable of forming. Can I think of Thee, O my God---of Thee who art my Creator, my Benefactor, my Father, as well as of all other beings---without experiencing the most delightful satisfaction, without feeling the most lively transports of gratitude and joy? I rejoice in Thee, O my God, I rejoice in thinking that Thou existest, that Thou art an eternal and infinitely perfect Being. I rejoice in thinking of the close relations which unite me to Thee. I rejoice in thinking on the ways of thy providence, on the manner in which thou hast arranged all things in the natural and moral world. I rejoice to think that every thing takes place by thy will,

will, that it is Thou who orderest and directest all things; that all is good and perfect in its kind; that all is the effect and proof of thine infinite love. It is in this light I would henceforward see all things; blessings and afflictions, pleasures and pains, all that befalls others and myself. I will not forget that all things come from Thee, and that it is thy wisdom and thy love which dispenses good and evil. My joy, my happiness, shall always consist in loving Thee, in conforming my will to thine, in resigning myself entirely into thy hands as into the hands of the best of fathers, and hereby strengthening more and more the ties which unite me to Thee.

It is true my gross senses, and the different ties which unite me to the earth, do not permit me so often to elevate my soul to Thee, nor to perceive thine adorable perfections and august presence in that lively manner my soul desires in the moments consecrated to piety; but it is thy goodness has thus limited my perceptions of Thee. I am not yet what I should be. I shall

hereafter know Thee better, adore Thee more worthily, unite myself more closely to Thee, and love Thee with more ardour; and then shall I experience, in contemplating Thee, O my God, the purest and most ravishing joy.

ON

LOVE TO JESUS CHRIST.

WHAT man is there, who is sensible to the charms of innocence and virtue, whether Christian or not, that can follow Jesus through the course of his life in this world---hear him speak and see him act---without admiring his zeal for truth, his love for the human race, his disinterested undertaking, and the greatness of his mind? Who can attentively consider the actions of Jesus, compare them together, and justly estimate their value, without perceiving in him that perfect innocence, that eminent sanctity and incorruptible integrity which endeared him to his disciples, and which enabled him with a noble confidence to ask his enemies, "Which of you accuses me of sin?" Who can behold all the train of virtues which accompanied him wherever he went, and which animated all his discourses and all his actions,

without regarding him with admiration as the completest model of human dignity and excellence?

Yes, my Saviour, when I read the history of thy life, which bears on it the strong impression and stamp of truth, I read the history of innocence, virtue, and piety personified. Whether I mix in the crowd that follows Thee, or join the small number of thy beloved disciples, to listen to the instructions flowing from thy divine lips---whether I accompany Thee to the temple, mingle in the company of thy friends or enemies, or go with Thee to the solitary mountains or the peaceful town of Bethlehem---whether I behold Thee surrounded with little children, or the infirm, the diseased, the poor, or the distressed---whether I hear those around Thee crying, Hosanna to the Son of David, or crucify him, crucify him---whether I contemplate Thee acting or suffering, in strength and vigour, or in thy suffering and agony, Thou appearest always the same; always full of reverence to God and submission to his will; always employed in communicating to men the light of truth;
always

always the declared enemy of hypocrify and vice; always the most tender friend to the unhappy; always disposed to succour and relieve the sufferings of human nature; to bear, with indulgence and compassion, the faults and injustice of men; to instruct with unwearied zeal the ignorant and superstitious multitude, and to labour for the happiness of the human race.

How can I think of Thee without experiencing the most lively admiration, the most delightful transports of joy and the purest love? Thou hast heaped on me innumerable favours; thou hast brought me to the knowledge of truths the most sublime and consolatory, and hast guided me in the path of light, where I find so much joy and satisfaction. If I no longer groan in the darkness of idolatry, and under the bondage of vice and superstition; if I no longer tremble at the idea of God, as of a severe master and inexorable judge; if I no longer consider death with fear and terror, as the termination of my existence and my happiness---it is to Thee I am indebted. : Thou
hast

Thou hast taught me to see nothing in God, but a tender Father; and nothing in death but a passage to a better life. Thou hast opened my heart to the sweetest hopes, and hast disclosed to the eyes of my faith the most cheering prospects into futurity. Art thou not my Saviour? Am I not the object of thy compassion, whom thou hast rescued from perdition?—Yes.—It is by thy doctrine I am brought from darkness to light, from misery to happiness. Thou hast loosed my bonds; Thou hast set me free, and put me into a condition of rejoicing in my liberty. He whom thou hast freed, O Son of the Most High, is free indeed!

Art thou not my forerunner and my guide in the road of virtue and felicity? Am I not thy follower; and ought I not to walk in thy steps? Thou hast smoothed the path of life, and ledest me in the way in which I should go. Conducted by thy spirit, I shall walk with a firm and steady step, and shall finally arrive at the mark to which thou callest me. What acknowledgments do I owe Thee! To what height of felicity hast thou

thou raised me ; and how much happier still may I become by thine assistance !

But in order to procure all these advantages and blessings for me and for my brethren, how many hardships hast Thou experienced, how many sacrifices hast Thou made, to what humiliations hast Thou submitted ! What a toilsome life hast Thou led, and what grievous afflictions hast Thou endured ! Thou hast generously sacrificed thyself for us. Thou hast died that we might live, and be eternally happy. Can there be a more convincing proof of love than that of yielding life for our friends ? And Thou, generous Benefactor of mankind, Thou hast done still more, Thou hast died for us who neither knew Thee nor loved Thee.

And shall I be so ungrateful as not to love Thee, who hast first loved me, and who hast obtained such astonishing blessings for me ? When I muse on all these things, I feel my heart burn within me ; I am filled with gratitude and joy, and I ardently desire more and more to resemble Thee. The thought
that

that Thou art my Master, my Guide, my Savior, my Lord, and my King, and that I am thy disciple, thy follower, thy subject, shall be my boast and my happiness. Constrained by thy love, I will cordially obey thy laws, and cheerfully imitate thy example, governed by the spirit of true affection, every hardship is easy, every burthen light. The field of duty shall be to me the field of pleasure. Command me to any duty, however painful and laborious, I will welcome thy will: Bid me take up my cross, and sacrifice my pleasures and earthly prospects, I follow thy footsteps with resignation and joy. I will take the liveliest interest in all that Thou hast done, taught, and suffered. I will rejoice in what Thou hast so richly merited of mankind, and that the work which Thou hast undertaken on earth has had such salutary effects, which still continue, and will endure for ever. I will rejoice in thy grace and benevolence to the human race, and will endeavour to make all around me acquainted with our obligations to Thee. I sincerely rejoice Thou art gone to the Father, and will

will exult in thy glorious victory over death and the grave.

Salvation unto our God who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb. Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto Him who sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.

OR

LOVE TO MANKIND.

AS God is Love itself, so his great commandment in nature and religion is fraternal Love. We are formed by nature to take a part in the pleasures and pains of our fellow-creatures; and the exercise of this affection for others, is the source of the purest and the sweetest pleasures to ourselves. We cannot with a generous heart assist our brethren, do them a kindness, and bear, on their account, a trouble or a loss, without feeling an elevation of mind, and an addition to our happiness; and never do we shut our hearts to love—never do we open them to envy, hatred and enmity, without disturbing the peace of our minds, and rendering ourselves more or less unhappy. So clearly is it thy will, O my God, that we should love one another. So audible is the voice of nature which speaks in favour of our brethren, and which resounds to the bottom of the heart.

Thou,

Thou, O God, hast so interwoven our reciprocal interests, our pleasures and our pains, all our employments, labours, designs, and hopes; Thou hast so connected us together, that it is in the bosom of society, and in the mutual exertion of our powers, we can alone attain the end of our existence, and enjoy all the happiness of which we are susceptible. Could mankind be capable of existing in an independent state, or, what is the same, a state of equality, the noblest affections of the human breast would languish and die without an object for their exertion; human nature would degenerate into savageness, and the solitary individual, lost to all sense of what is great and liberal, would know no happiness himself by having no interest in the happiness of others. But in that state of mutual dependence in which Thou, the great Parent of mankind, hast placed us, an intercourse of mutual good offices is kept up, habits of reciprocal affection are formed, and general order and harmony promoted.

When I consider the relations which subsist between my brethren and myself, I am
naturally

naturally led to consider what fraternal affection I should feel for them. Thou hast united us, O my God, by a thousand ties. The same blood runs in our veins; members of the same family, we all descend from the first man whom Thou createdst, and we all adore Thee as our common Parent. We have all the same origin, the same nature, and the same destination. The small and great, subjects and sovereigns, are all formed from the same dust, and shall all, sooner or later, return to it. But we have within us what is more noble and divine: a mind that can raise itself to the knowledge of Thee, and unite itself to Thee, who art the Father of spirits. Endued with the same faculties, with the same corporeal and mental powers; reason and liberty are our greatest ornament. The traces of thy divine image shine equally in the poorest and richest, in the highest and lowest of mankind. Subjected to the same wants, we are united by a variety of ties. No one can do without his brethren, or is sufficient by himself; no one can be exclusively happy. Thou hast so interwoven our pleasures and pains with the pains and pleasures

fures of others, that, without reciprocal assistance, we can neither taste the one, nor sustain the other; and whatever may be our external situation, the great purpose of our being is the same. This life is to each of us the school, the scene of discipline and trial; and immortality, joined to a constantly increasing perfection, shall be our common destiny in the future life. This great, this invaluable advantage, and the only one that shall last for ever, belongs equally to the rich and the poor, the learned and illiterate; it is the chief property and prerogative of man, it constitutes all his dignity and superiority.

And shall I not love beings so closely connected with me, and who resemble me in so many things? Shall I be cold and indifferent with respect to them? Shall I even permit myself to hate them? Shall I not know them when I meet them in the garb of indigence, and the tatters of poverty? Shall I be ashamed of being their relation, their companion, their brother? Shall I treat them as beings of an inferior species, and withhold from them the affection and

concern which I owe them? If this were the case, dare I continue to boast of being a man? Could I say that I perceive, that I feel the dignity of my nature?

Can I, especially, sustain the character of a Christian, if I am not actuated by a sincere and generous affection for all men? Is not the whole of Christianity summed up in love? Is not this the object which all its instructions, all its precepts, all its promises are employed to attain?

What virtue shone, with the greatest lustre, in Jesus Christ? What virtue has he more expressly required of his disciples? What virtue has rendered the Christian religion more worthy of reception, and procured it more profelytes than this charity, this fraternal love which reigned amongst the first Christians? No: there is no virtue more essential to Christianity: and to pretend to be a Christian, without a sincere and active charity, is to pretend to what is impossible and contradictory. "By this," says Jesus Christ, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another."

Every

Every man, then, whatever be his name, his rank, his station, his condition, his country, or religion—every man is my neighbour and my brother; every man is thy work and thy child, O thou Creator of the human race! Beloved and cherished by Thee, he ought to be so by me. No one ought to be indifferent to me, no one ought to be excluded from my affection. Far from despising and hating them, I will regard them all with that benevolence with which thou regardest them. I will rejoice in thinking of the exalted powers with which Thou hast endued them, on all the multitude of advantages with which Thou hast enriched their bodies and their souls. May no envy, jealousy, or sordid interest ever lead me to despise or slight those gifts and advantages which thou hast bestowed on them. May these passions never lead me to behold with indifference the happiness of my brethren. I will rejoice to think on their different talents, their amiable qualities, and virtuous conduct; and on all the well-earned riches and innocent pleasures they enjoy. God forbid I should ever disturb them in the

F 2

possession

possession of their riches, or the enjoyment of their pleasures. I will rejoice in thinking of the relations which subsist between us, and the assistance I may derive from them. These relations shall be always sacred to me, and the hope of this assistance shall animate me to render them every service in my power. I will rejoice in thinking of the happiness provided for them in a future world, and in whatever may tend to conduct them towards it. Never will I seek to impede their progress, never will I throw obstacles in their road to perfection and happiness.

No---nothing which relates to them, nothing which happens to them, shall be indifferent to me. I will weep with them that weep, and rejoice with them that rejoice. What interests my fellow-creatures shall be interesting to me. The evils they suffer, the blessings they enjoy, are blessings and evils common to human nature, belonging equally to the great family of which I am a member. And what sight can be more pleasing to Thee, O Heavenly Father, than
that

that of thy children united together in love, having but one heart and one soul?

If I am animated with these sentiments, my love will be neither barren nor unfruitful. It will direct me in all my conduct, and influence every action. I shall do with pleasure what it requires, and avoid what it forbids. I shall harbour no thought, I shall cherish no wish, I shall utter no word, I shall pass no judgment, I shall form no designs, execute no undertaking, and enjoy no pleasures, which may be inconsistent with love. Influenced by this generous principle, I shall cheerfully sacrifice my own personal advantage for the general good. I shall be willing to labour and suffer for others. I shall live to be useful to them, and to return the kindnesses they have done me. As far as I can I will deliver them from the burthens with which they are oppressed, or lighten their weight. I will remove from their path the stone of stumbling, second their good intentions, befriend their useful undertakings, and do all in my power to unite them more and more to each other. I will countenance, as far as depends on me, the pro-

gress of truth and of virtue, of liberty and happiness; and spread, to the utmost of my ability, content and joy in the circle in which I move. This is what love requires of me, and to these objects all my efforts shall be directed.

But let me now enquire what hath hitherto been my conduct in this respect? What good or what evil have I done? Have I injured or afflicted any one? Have none of my brethren a ground of complaint against me? Is there no one weeping under the wrongs I have done him? Is there no poor, unfortunate person, whom I might have relieved, and to whom I have refused assistance? No feeble creature, no sinner, whose frailties and faults I ought to have borne with; whose amendment I should have tried by fraternal remonstrances to have effected; and whom, instead of this, I have made to feel the effects of my anger and wrath? Is there no one in a low condition whom I have treated with haughtiness, no timid and modest person whom I have tyrannized over and oppressed? Is there no one who, at this moment, is resenting my conduct to-

wards

wards him? Have I judged no one with too much severity, and reproached no one unjustly? Alas! if at this moment any one of my fellow-creatures is shedding a tear on my account, or experiencing some disappointment through my misconduct, how can I look up to Thee, my God? How dare I call Thee Father, and consider myself as thy child, if I have hardened my heart against the distresses of others! Would to God I could, at this moment, draw to my bosom my brother, whom I have injured or afflicted, take from him all occasion of dissatisfaction, wipe away all tears, and testify to him my repentance!

Yes, O my God, if my conscience reproach me with any faults of this kind, and if thou allow me but another day to live, I will do what I can to repair the injury. I will not be ashamed to acknowledge my fault and to correct it, were it my inferior, my servant, or the lowest person upon earth that I have injured. For the least as well as the greatest is my brother, the child of my heavenly Father, to whom I owe as much affection as to others. O God! confirm me

in this purpose, and give me strength to execute it; and let the purest and the liveliest love penetrate and inflame my heart, and let it make me more and more to resemble Thee, who art Love, and who dwellest in Love.

THE

LOVE OF LABOUR;

OR,

IF

ATTACHMENT TO THE DUTIES OF OUR CONDITION.

THOU hast designed us, Oh God, for action and labour, and Thou hast connected the greatest advantages and the sweetest pleasures with an active and laborious life. Woe to him who, forgetting the design of his being, gives himself up to sloth and idleness. Peace and contentment fly far from him. Dissatisfaction and weariness attend his steps; shame and misery will sooner or later be his portion.

Whilst the beasts of the field receive from thy hands their cloathing and their food, without labour and toil; whilst they easily procure all they stand in need of, and live free from anxiety and fear, with respect to the future; we, Oh God! who are thy noblest work on earth, are subjected by thy
 Providence

Providence to a multitude of indispenfible wants, which we can only fupply by labour and pains. Thou expofeft us in the journey of life to a thoufand difficulties and obftacles which require continual exertions to furmount and overcome. We muft purchafe what is neceffary, ufeful and agreeable; our daily bread, our cloathing, and our pleafures, at the expence of induftry and pains, and with the fweat of our brow. How can we forget that we are deftined to labour, or help acknowledging the wife and paternal views Thou haft had in laying thy children under this neceffity?

Thou haft endued us with many exalted faculties, which raife us much above the brute creation. But it is only by making ufe of thefe faculties and powers, that we can enlarge and improve them, become wife and virtuous, and be prepared to enter, after death, into a more perfect and happy ftate. —It is for this purpofe Thou haft appointed us to lead an active and laborious life, and excited us to it by the moft powerful motives. It is only by the exercife of our faculties that we can preferve our fuperiority

periority over inferior creatures, attain the great end of our existence, and become, in this world, and another, all that beings, created in thy image, rational creatures, capable of infinite improvement, can, and ought to become.

Every kind of work, every employment, every sort of life in which thou hast placed us, is suited to produce this effect. Every thing serves to exercise our powers, to teach us to reflect, to be masters of ourselves, to pay Thee a filial obedience, to love mankind as our brethren, to improve in wisdom, and to practice virtue. Whether the objects about which we are engaged be of great or of little consequence, in every thing we do we should shew ourselves attentive, assiduous, faithful, firm, upright, and conscientious. What is most important is, not the thing about which we are employed, but the manner of our performing it. Our employments here below, far from being the supreme end of our existence, are only the means of attaining the supreme end. No labour that in the least unfolds, expands, and exercises our intellectual faculties, which makes us wiser and better,

ter, is lost to us, how small soever the credit, advantage, and pleasure, we may, in other respects, derive from it.

The obligation to labour shall not be to me a troublesome and oppressive burthen, from which I will seek to free myself. So far from it, that this obligation which Thou, supreme in goodness, hast laid me under, being a means employed by Thee to conduct me to a more eminent perfection, shall always be dear and delightful to me. In fulfilling it I find the sweetest recompence for my exertions. It is only when I make a proper use of my abilities, when I fulfil with fidelity and exactness the duties of my station, and successfully contribute to the public good; it is then, alone, I taste the pure pleasures of existence; it is then only I can with comfort account to myself, and to Thee, my Creator, for the employment of my powers, my time, and my advantages. Then alone I can look with an eye of satisfaction, at the close of each day, on the employments in which I have been engaged, and meet, with cheerfulness, those of the morrow; and hope, as the price of my labour.

labour, for an abundant harvest. Then alone, arrived at the end of my career, I shall be able to recal the past without confusion and regret; and the idea, that every day of my life has been marked by some good action, by some virtuous effort, shall fill me with joy in the arms of death.

Yes, Oh my God, I revere and adore thy wisdom and goodness in the natural and moral disposition of things. I perceive, and I am convinced how indispensable is the obligation I am under to lead an active and laborious life, and faithfully to fulfil the duties of my station. May I never forget this obligation, and endeavour every day of my life more punctually to discharge it.

Yes, I will love labour in itself, independently of the external advantages it procures me. To be rationally, lawfully, and usefully employed, whatever may be in other respects the apparent success of my labours, is the noblest life; it is the life of the soul.

All my faculties, all my powers, O God, all my abilities, all the means of service I possess, are the gifts of thy bounty, are talents which Thou hast entrusted to my improvement.

ment. At the last day I shall be obliged to give an account of the use I have made of them.

Thou, who art the sovereign disposer of all things, hast placed me in my present station. Thou hast entrusted me with certain offices relative to the happiness of thy children on earth. And shall I not be heartily concerned worthily to fill my place, to contribute all in my power to the well-being of thy great family, of which I am a member?

Thou hast connected me with my brethren, by an infinite variety of ties. I cannot do without their assistance. Every day they perform for me the most important services, and shall I confine myself to receiving and enjoying, without making any return? I could not live but by charity, and shall I repay my benefactors with ingratitude?

Indolence and sloth will only encrease the burthens of my employment, and render them more troublesome and difficult. My power will decrease, and my faculties be impaired, in proportion as I neglect to use them.

What shame, what remorse, what punishment does not the indolent man prepare for himself

himself at the close of every day, at the close of every year, and, above all, at the close of a life entirely spent in trifling occupations, and lost beyond retrieve! After having sown so little, after having sown nothing but bad grain, what harvest can be expected! And if I have been the parent of a family, what a wretched example have I set to my children and servants, by my dislike of labour, or my carelessness in going through it. Those who surround me are more or less influenced by my conduct, and will find in my faults a pretext to justify their own.

Can inactivity and idleness be consistent with love to God and men? Are they consistent with the character of a Christian, who takes a lively interest in the happiness of others, who loves to labour, to suffer, and even to sacrifice himself for them—of a Christian, who ought not to content himself with a conduct exempt from crimes, or a common virtue, but, who ought to distinguish himself from others, by the brightness of his virtue, and to shine as a light in the world—of a Christian, the disciple of a Master, whose meat and drink it was to do the will of his
Heavenly

Heavenly Father, and whose conduct was governed by this maxim: "I must work whilst it is called to-day, for the night cometh wherein no man can work."

I cannot doubt, therefore, O my God, that indolence is diametrically opposite to thy will and designs. It degrades, it disgraces, it unnerves a man. It is inconsistent with our own happiness, and that of others. It makes us unworthy of the name of reasonable creatures, useful citizens, and true Christians.

Far then from me be the disgraceful thought of indolence---the idea I entertain of Thee, O my God! the recollection of my dignity as a man, and a Christian---the remembrance of what I owe to Thee, and to my brethren, all unite to engage me to lead an active and industrious life, to employ my abilities in a manner the most useful to others, and the most honourable to myself. Oh my God! impress these thoughts deeply in my heart; may these motives frequently present themselves to my mind, and duly influence my conduct every day of my life.

THE
SAFEST RULE
IN THE
CONDUCT OF LIFE.

OH my God, in whom I live and move, and have my being, what is the wisest use I can make of the present life? What road ought I to pursue, in order most safely to attain the end of my existence? How can I most successfully prepare myself for a more perfect and happy state after death? How different are the paths in which men walk! How opposite and contradictory are the maxims they follow, and the ends they propose to themselves! Nothing is more common than to see them wandering into forbidden paths, and failing of the end they have in view! To avoid falling into the same mistakes, I need a sure and safe rule which I may follow without danger, and an
G enlightened

enlightened guide in whom I may entirely confide. But where shall I find either the one or the other, unless in the heavenly doctrine of thy son Jesus Christ, and the example which he hath left us. Yes, He is the way, the truth, and the life. Thou hast given us, in his person, the most perfect model. To him we must continually look, after him we must frame our lives; to his voice we must be attentive and obedient, and in his steps we must tread. Whoever follows him with sincerity and perseverance cannot go astray; but will finally attain the highest degree of perfection of which he is capable. Would to God I may become every day more like him.

The idea of Thee, his and our Heavenly Father, was the first and last thought that engaged his attention. To do thy will with pleasure, to contribute to the execution of thy benevolent purposes, to fulfil the work thou gavest him to do—this was his meat and drink, this constituted his happiness, and was the governing rule of his conduct. To be useful to mankind was his favourite and constant employment. Compassion, benevo-

4

lence,

lence, and charity, followed him every where, and animated all his discourses. The purest virtue, and the sublimest piety, were his faithful companions in solitude, and in the intercourse of life. He did not compel mankind to receive his instructions, and embrace his doctrines; but he earnestly and zealously made use of all opportunities for instructing and enlightening them, for leading them to reflection, and for sowing in their hearts the seeds of virtue. Delighting to do good in secrecy and silence, he carefully avoided all appearance of ostentation and vain glory. But, when his duty required him to act openly and publicly, then no obstacle, no difficulty, no danger, restrained him; and, far from fearing the judgments of men, he exposed himself to their censures, by boldly opposing their prejudices. Never did he prefer his own ease and personal advantage to the welfare of his brethren; never did he refuse his assistance to those who applied to him; never did he defer, till the morrow, the duties of the present day, and thus lose an opportunity of performing some good work; never did he suffer himself to be dis-

couraged by the ingratitude of men, or by the abuse they made of his favours; never did he indulge the least complaint of a life so laborious; so sorrowful, and so entirely devoted to the salvation of the human race; never did he regret the time and labour he bestowed on this great work, even when his labours and good offices did not produce the effects which ought to have attended them. It was thus that Jesus went about doing good at all times, on all occasions, and to all men; to his enemies as well as to his friends, in the most discouraging as well as the most favourable circumstances. It was thus he passed the days of his short life, in the bosom of innocence, and in the exercise of virtue. All were consecrated to the glory of God, and the happiness of men; all were full of good works, and marked by virtuous endeavours. Never had he reason to blush at the use he made of his time, or to regret its loss; never did he form the useless wish of recalling the day that was passed, or of blotting out its recollection. All the days of his life were the monuments of his integrity, his piety, and his charity, the review of which rejoiced his

his

his soul. All promised him a rich and abundant harvest; and it was the remembrance of the good use he had made of them which made him say, with a firm confidence, at the end of his career, "It is finished."

And such also, O my God, is the use I ought to make of my days. I ought to continue thy work upon earth, and supply, in some measure, the place of my Lord and Master, in the midst of my brethren. His spirit should animate me, his conduct should be the pattern for mine. What a grand and important vocation! May I never lose sight of it, but walk with resolution and constancy in the path which Jesus hath marked out, and by which he himself arrived at immortal happiness.

Yes, I will look unto Jesus, and follow his steps with cheerfulness and perseverance. I will think and live like him, be guided by his precepts and example, and make my felicity and my glory to consist in becoming more and more like him. Grant me, O Merciful God, thine assistance, and the aids of that spirit which Thou didst shed so abundantly on thy well-beloved Son. Thus sup-

ported and protected by Thee, Almighty God, I shall, like Jesus Christ, surmount the greatest difficulties, and, like him also, shall find my greatest happiness and glory in the practice of virtue.

EXERCISES OF PIETY,

SUITED TO THE

SEVERAL RELATIONS

OF

DOMESTIC AND CIVIL LIFE.

THE duties of social life are an important subject, on which the enlightened and virtuous Christian will reflect with the closest attention, because that the just discharge of these mutual obligations, which in every age of the world have been held sacred, is absolutely necessary to personal integrity, to the peace and order of families, the strength of civil communities, the dignity, improvement, and welfare of mankind.

In reflecting on the various duties of social life, it is proper to begin with the duties of the married state, because this was actually the first relation contracted, the first

special tie and bond of union established in human life. It is the root of all others, and has therefore, if we follow nature, a claim to our chief attention and regard.

AN

EXERCISE OF PIETY

FOR

A MARRIED PERSON.

IT is Thou, O God, who hast instituted marriage, that mankind, by this means, may fulfil thy designs on earth, and contribute to the happiness of each other. He who without sufficient reasons, or with criminal intentions refuses to enter into this state; he who seeks to gratify his desires out of wedlock, manifestly opposes thy will, and neglects to fulfil his destination upon earth. He is a rebellious subject of thy government, an enemy to human life and happiness. This institution is assuredly one of those which bears the plainest marks of thy wisdom and supreme benevolence. What connection is there which more closely unites the human

3

race,

race, and more powerfully engages them to blend their interests and their views, to participate in each others anxieties and cares?—What is there that more exalts, ennobles, and multiplies their earthly existence?—What is there which furnishes them with stronger motives to exercise and unfold their faculties and talents, and to discharge with unwearied zeal the duties of their station? What is there which more strongly attaches them to civil society, and makes them take a more lively and active interest in its happiness?—What is there that promises more support and consolation in old age; what opens more diversified sources of pleasure and joy, and raises more delightful hopes, with respect to the future, than the sacred and honourable state of marriage?

Yes—this shall always be to me a sacred relation. I will endeavour faithfully to discharge all its duties, and cheerfully submit to any self-denials it may render necessary. Far from being ashamed of the nuptial tie, or speaking of it with raillery, and a blameable levity—far from blushing at the sentiments of esteem and tenderness with which

it inspires me for the person with whom I am united, I will make it my boast and my pride to cherish and love that person as another self, and will never lose sight of the intimate relations which subsist between us, nor of the duties which arise from them. Far from choosing the state of marriage only that I may enjoy greater liberty and independence—far from being directed in my choice by external advantages only, such as affluence and rank, as if the qualities of the mind, which are of the most fruitful sources of domestic happiness or misery, were indifferent to me; I will pay the principal attention to the moral character, an honest mind, a sound judgment, a liberal manner of thinking, a tender, virtuous, and pious heart, as the most solid foundation of conjugal felicity, and will prefer these advantages to all the lustre of externals.

Instead of suffering myself to be led astray by ambition, avarice, the love of ease and luxury, so as to lose sight of the chief end of marriage, and to consider children, which are its most precious fruits, as a burthen, I will, on the contrary, believe, that the more creatures

tures there are susceptible of happiness, who by my means are brought into existence, and whom I have led into the road to felicity, the better I have answered my design on earth, and the more thankful shall I be for having lived here below. Far from expecting to find nothing but what is agreeable and delightful in this connection, I will never forget, that its pleasures are indissolubly joined with the tenderest anxieties and cares; and, that it is only by a voluntary subjection to the latter, and bearing them with patience, that I can hope to taste the former, without shame and remorse, and enjoy them in all their extent.

The more diversified and intimate the ties by which marriage unites me to my wife, (husband) to my family, and to society, the more zealous and active shall I be for the personal and general good of those to whom I am related, and the more ambitious shall I be to discharge the duties of my station. There is no kind of labour, application, and care, how burthensome or easy soever I may find it, how great or how trifling soever be its object, which ought not to appear important
and

and sacred whilst it is capable of contributing to the happiness of those with whom I am connected. My desire and endeavour shall not be to make a figure in the great world, but to become useful in the small circle in which I am placed, and to taste the pure and tranquil happiness of domestic life. If no one ought to think, act, and live for himself alone, how much less should the person who lives in the conjugal union? If he be acquainted with his obligations, he will share the blessings and afflictions of life with the person to whom he is united. He will always open his heart to her, and communicate all his sentiments. He will endeavour to ease her cares, to lessen her troubles, to remove every stone of stumbling, and avoid, as far as possible, any occasion of discontent and chagrin. Neither of them can be contented or discontented, happy or unhappy, without the other in some degree partaking his feelings. This mutual confidence will be attended with the most beneficial effects. A suspicious disposition is the bane
of

of all domestic bliss. It is that poisonous leaven which infects every comfort of life, and converts the cup of happiness into a cup of poison, bitter as the wormwood and the gall. Far be from me, then, every illiberal suspicion. I have received a wife to be my partner till death. She has left her father's shelter, and her mother's love, and trusted herself to mine. For the confidence she has reposed in my faith, shall I shew *her* none? Shall I wantonly grieve a bosom, that has no other receptacle for its own grief but mine.

Marriage makes it our duty to endeavour to correct each other's faults, and to make the road of virtue more smooth and easy to each other; and this is another source of comfort which it opens to us. Of what efficacy ought not the examples, the advice, the exhortations, and prayers, to be, between persons so closely united, and filled with esteem and love for each other?— We should act as guides and supports to each other, to warn one another, with the tenderest anxiety, of the dangers
which

which threaten ; to assist each other in overcoming temptations, and to encourage each other in a course of piety and virtue.

May my partner and myself never forget, that it was before Thee, O my God, that we first promised to be constant, kind, and true : that the vows then entered into are not to be sported with, nor their obligation profanely cast away. A persuasion of this is the firmest bulwark of virtue, and the surest foundation of mutual happiness.

May we never neglect to pray for thy blessing on our mutual connection. United together, in mutual affection, to pour out our common prayer, as the offering of one heart before Thee, who art Love itself, and the Rewarder of those that love Thee, is surely the highest circumstance of satisfaction which the wise can fancy, or the good can realize. Assisted by one another's virtue, our good dispositions will be confirmed ; and, where life, in other circumstances, would be a burden, it will not
be

be felt, as divided between us. We shall pass through life, blessing and blest; and meet again, in another world, never to separate, or to die any more.

AN EXERCISE OF PIETY

FOR

A PARENT.

O GOD, the Creator of all men, and the Source of all happiness, Thou makest use of thy creatures as the instrument by whom thou communicatest thy gifts, and even life itself, to other beings of the same species; and by this plan thou makest them partakers of thy supreme felicity, in the divine and heavenly pleasures of making others happy.

Thou hast permitted me to taste of this happiness, and I am an instrument in thy hands, by whom Thou conveyest life and happiness to thy creatures upon earth.

Thou hast given me children, and committed them to my direction and care. What a valuable present of thy bounty! What an abundant source of pleasure and joy, of perfection and of happiness, for me and for

H

society!

society! Thou hast implanted in me the tenderest affection to my feeble offspring. Thou hast made me as feelingly alive to their pleasures and pains as to my own. Thou hast not left my children dependent on the cool dictates of reason, but hast urged me to the full discharge of my duty by the stimulations of an instinct more speedy and forcible in its operations than any deliberate arguments could possibly be. Thou hast engaged and animated me to do them all the good in my power by every feeling of the heart. This affection which burns within me is a spark of that love which thou bearest to all thy creatures. But this parental affection ought to be, like thine, a wise and enlightened principle. Its object should be, not an external and momentary happiness, but a true and permanent felicity.

It is not merely to the subsistence of my children, to the growth and shape of their bodies, that I would devote my chief attention, but, principally, to the culture of their minds. It is my duty to form them to rational men, sincere Christians, useful members of society, affectionate husbands and
wives,

wives, tender parents, good masters, faithful friends, and virtuous citizens. It is my duty to teach them to love their Creator above all, to love their fellow-creatures as their brethren, and to rejoice in the persuasion that thou art our common-Father. I should form them not only for time, but for eternity.

This is the most noble and honourable employment upon earth. This is the most important and the most delightful duty Thou hast required of me. I will sacrifice every thing, the flattering pleasures and the sweetest enjoyments of life, to this important task. No age, no state, no other relation of life can set me free from so sacred an obligation. It is *myself* who must discharge it; and I cannot, either wholly or in part, make over this duty to another; since it is impossible that an hireling should feel the same sentiments which animate the breast of a parent, and should be susceptible of the same zeal and the same patience. If I am obliged to have recourse, in this important office, to the assistance and talents of others, they can act

only under my direction, and as workers together with me.

This duty is undoubtedly difficult and laborious ; but if, by thine assistance, O my God, I acquit myself with success, what a train of pleasures and advantages will result from it to myself and society.

To guide feeble and ignorant creatures in the road to happiness ; to teach them to make a good use of their powers ; to contribute to the unfolding of the faculties and dispositions with which they are endued ; to guard innocent beings from error, vice, and misery, who are exposed to a thousand dangers and temptations ; to throw the seeds of truth, wisdom, and virtue into their young minds, as yet open to every impression ; to cherish and strengthen more and more the good dispositions which begin to spring up in them ; to bring them acquainted with the design of their being, both present and future ; to keep them at a distance from the poisonous sources of vice and folly, and to open to them those of wisdom, contentment, and joy ; to fit them for acting their part on the great theatre of the world, with credit

to themselves and satisfaction to their fellow-creatures.—What a noble and sublime employment! What a recompence will attend it in this world and another. May I be more penetrated with a sense of its dignity and importance, that I may acquit myself with a zeal that shall ensure its success!

Yes, to give my children a liberal and Christian education shall be my principal and my sweetest occupation. Every thing animates me to this duty—nature, religion, the happiness of my children, my own happiness, and that of society.

Am I not answerable for my conduct with respect to them, to the tribunal of my own conscience, to society, and to God, who is the Father of my children? Do not their usefulness or unusefulness in the world; the good or evil they shall do; their happiness or misery, present or future—do they not depend in a great measure on the education and cultivation I shall have given them? May I not form the most delightful and rejoicing expectations with respect to futurity if I have zealously endeavoured to give them a good education? On the contrary, must

I not expect the most cutting sorrow if I have neglected this duty, or have acquitted myself ill in it?

What wish shall I one day form, when death shall separate me from them? What will then console me, and enable me to go with tranquillity into the state of retribution which awaits me in another world? Will it satisfy me to think that my children are sufficiently advanced to do without me; that I leave them a decent patrimony, or even considerable riches; that they are allied to opulent families; that I have laid the foundation of their advancement; that I have smoothed the way to important offices, dignities, and fortune? Will all this make me easy respecting their future lot, and give me the consoling hope of meeting them again in the mansions of eternal felicity? When the splendor and pomp of this world shall vanish from my sight, what shall I then wish with the greatest anxiety? Will it not be that my children may be wise and virtuous men, and good Christians; and that they may persevere in the path of wisdom and virtue? In my last moments it will little concern me
whether

whether they be in other respects rich or poor, elevated to the pinnacle of greatness, or lost in obscurity. With what tranquillity shall I then be able to separate from them, and leave them under the direction of their Heavenly Father! And shall I not at present aspire, shall I not incessantly strive to obtain this end? Shall I not do all in my power to attain it, and to procure for myself so delightful a satisfaction on the bed of death?

It is true the most careful education will not always succeed. The most precious seed may be choaked by bad examples, by the seduction of the corrupters of youth, or by the dominion of sensual appetites and irregular passions. All my attention and care may be useless, but it is not often so. Seldom does it happen that he who interests himself in the education of his children with a truly enlightened, active, and indefatigable zeal is put to so painful a trial. The fruits of his labours may not often discover themselves till late: if he do not live to reap the fruits himself, they may, nevertheless, one day come to maturity in this life or the future. Besides, when I have given up all

my attention to the education of my children, I have nothing with which to reproach myself, even when it shall have been of no use. In this case I am not the author of their misery: I have not contributed to it. How great soever it may be, I ought not to consider it as a punishment upon me, but as a disaster I could not possibly prevent.

Preserve me, O my God, if it may be, from this greatest of all distresses. Gracious God! Thou seest my beating, trembling heart; hear the prayer of a parent! Protect the feeble creatures Thou hast committed to my care! Suffer them not to become the deplorable victims of debauchery and vice. Uphold and direct them, that they may never go astray and be lost. Make their path strait before them. Support them in the way of life; and let innocence, truth, virtue, and piety always accompany them. Let them be heirs of unfading glory; let them be safe through eternity. O that my children may be heirs of God, and joint-heirs of Jesus Christ! Should they be soon removed hence, may it be into Abraham's bosom; or should they longer be continued
here,

here, may they be gathered at last, as a shock of corn, into the celestial garner.

Give thy blessing upon all I have undertaken with this view, and on whatever I shall hereafter undertake. If my feeble efforts are ill-directed, they are at least sincere. Supply my deficiencies, and grant me, Oh my God! more light and knowledge, that I may choose the best means, and not be discouraged in the discharge of my important duty. Happy, inexpressibly happy, shall I be, if at the hour of death, and in the day of judgment, I may be reunited to my children, never more to be separated; and be able to say, in the transports of joy, "Behold me, Lord, and the children thou hast given me. They have, like me, happily finished their course; they have kept the faith, and persevered in their obedience; and now they humbly wait, with me, for the recompence which Thou hast promised to those who have been faithful unto death."

With a view to all these blessings would I bring them, in the arms of faith and love, to the divine footstool, and resign them to the disposal of Infinite Goodness and Mercy.

To

To that kind and gracious God who gave them would I humbly commit them, to be guarded by thy Providence, ministered to by thine angels, influenced by thy Spirit, conducted safely through the dangers and evils of this world, and preserved to thy everlasting kingdom in the other.

AN EXERCISE OF PIETY

FOR

A CHILD.

IN what a state of weakness and dependence, O my God, are the children of men born! When they come into the world they are much more feeble, much more dependent, much more exposed to dangers than the most senseless animals. It is but slowly, and very late that they acquire sufficient strength to stand alone, without the assistance of their parents.

But this arrangement is the effect of thy paternal bounty. Thou intendest we should be raised above the brute creation, and become intelligent and moral beings. But such we cannot become but by a constant intercourse, and the daily instructions of persons better informed than ourselves. And it is in order that we may enjoy this society and instruction, that Thou hast so closely united us to beings of the same nature with ourselves.

ourselves, and placed us in such a state of dependence on one another.

I revere thy will, O my God; and I return Thee thanks for the ties which unite me to my parents, and all the advantages I derive from it.

Yes, I perceive how feeble and dependent I am, and desire to think and act accordingly. Happy shall I think myself if, filled with love and gratitude to my parents, I fulfil my obligations to them with a tractable and joyful heart.

How great are my obligations to them! What should I do without them? Surrounded from my birth with ten thousand dangers, I should probably not have escaped any one of them, if the supporting and watchful hand of a father or a mother, or of persons who supplied their place, had not protected and snatched me from the dangers which threatened me. Exposed to a thousand wants, without the power of supplying them; a prey to hunger and thirst, to cold and heat, to sorrow and disease, I should have fallen a victim to all these evils had it not been for the assiduous attention of those
who

who were around me, and their care to supply my want of knowledge and of strength. For how long a time hath this state of weakness and dependence (in which I still in a great degree find myself) continued? A stranger to every thing, the least thing fills me with fear and trouble. My mind, as feeble as my body, stumbles at every step, falls into a thousand errors, and, dazzled by a false lustre, suffers itself to be easily led astray by vain appearances. To this day I have not acquired sufficient experience to confide entirely in myself. To-day I judge totally different of men and things from what I did yesterday. Knowing but little of the design of my being, and the means of attaining it, I cannot yet tread with a firm and steady foot in the path of life. How much do I need an enlightened and faithful guide? Without such a director I run the risque of straying into a thousand obscure bye paths, the victim of every impostor who wishes to abuse my credulity, and the sport of every accident.

But who amongst mankind will guide me with more kindness, prudence, and circum-

spection than a father or a mother? My parents are the first and surest guides I can have in the journey of life, which is to me at present an unknown road. They will give me the benefit of their experience, light and strength. They will warn me of the dangers I run, and remove the obstacles that lie in my way. They will teach me to distinguish reality from appearance, and to form a right judgment of mankind and the objects around me. They will raise me when I fall, and encourage my trembling steps. They will lead me insensibly to wisdom and virtue, to the knowledge of God and religion, which they will teach me to study and to follow, as the noblest and most friendly guides to man, the most faithful and the surest conductors to happiness.

How great then are my obligations to my parents! How can I ever acquit myself to them, and sufficiently acknowledge my gratitude. How much have my maintenance, my early education, and the improvement of my mind already cost them; and how much anxiety, pain, and labour have I not occasioned them! How many conveniences,
and

and pleasures, and accommodations have they not given up on my account! How many tears have I made them shed for me! How much disappointment and distress have they experienced for me! How much more have they watched, laboured, and lived for me, than for themselves!

And have I never made a perverse return for their love. Have I never repaid their kindness with ingratitude? Yet they have never ceased to give me new proofs of their tenderness, and to labour for my happiness.

Alas! it is now I see my faults. The idea of having occasioned them anxiety and mortification, and of having grieved *their* hearts, afflicts and tears my own. I am ashamed that by obstinacy and disobedience I have hindered their good intentions in my behalf, and failed in my duty to them.

I will try in future to repair these faults, and to give them only satisfaction. To this my best endeavours shall be directed. Filial piety shall direct and animate all my conduct. Burning with desire to shew my sense of obligation, I will say and do nothing that shall displease them. I will make it my
greatest

greatest pleasure to obey them, to afford them every service and assistance in my power, and to become their consolation and their joy. I will give myself up sincerely to their direction, instantly obey their commands, and, if possible, even anticipate their wishes. The end to which I will direct all my efforts shall be to make a good use of all the means of instruction they procure me, that I may become more intelligent and wise, and hereby make the best return in my power for all their kindness. Thus will I endeavour to lighten their burthens, relieve their cares, and rejoice their hearts with the pleasing hope that their labour has not been in vain.

Preserve me, Oh Merciful God, from the levity and inconstancy of my age. Let the idea of thy presence, and of thy will, confirm me in every good resolution I have formed, and do thou assist me to execute them with perseverance and fidelity!

AN EXERCISE OF PIETY

SUITED

TO YOUTH.

HOW pleasant are the days of youth! Like the fine days in the spring, they compose the prime of life, and promise in future a rich harvest. But, alas! they pass away with the same rapidity, and the hopes they raise are often as deceitful. In the moral, as in the natural world, the finest blossoms do not always produce the fruit we had reason to expect:

“ Fair is the bud his vernal morn brings forth,
 “ And fostering gales awhile the nursing fan.
 “ O smile, ye Heavens, serene! ye mildews wan,
 “ Ye blighting whirlwinds, spare his balmy prime.”

In vain are our wishes! Too often, blasted by the hoar-frost, or torn up by the tempest, the fairest buds of hope, and the most promising

I mising

mising plants perish, with the precious seed which they enclose.

How must it afflict the person, arrived at the maturity of manhood, when he casts his eyes over the days of youth, if they have flown away without improvement---if he has foolishly consumed them in trifling occupations, or lost them in idleness. What more distressing object can be held up to the view of society than that of a man whose faculties, instead of being unfolded and enlarged by exercise, are benumbed by inactivity, or debilitated or worn out in the service of vice; carrying with him, into the maturer season, nothing but the disgraceful feelings of weakness, regret, and remorse.

On the other hand, what pleasure must not a person experience in recalling to his mind the spring of life, who has employed it in forming his mind and his heart, in preparing himself for useful occupations; and who, having cultivated the precious seed which the Creator has sown within us, can hope to reap for himself and others the most excellent fruits. How delightful is the sight
of

of such a man to every sensible and virtuous person !

Happy will it be for me if I may one day taste this satisfaction, and procure it for my parents and fellow-citizens. Happy for me if I entertain at present the same opinion of the important design of youth as I shall certainly have in maturer years, and in old age, in the hours of retirement and recollection, and at the approach of death.

How different is the point of view in which manhood and old age see the days of their youth, from that in which they are beheld by the young man himself ! and how much more likely to be just is their opinion which is formed on their own experience and that of others. Where is the man who ever repented of having well-employed his youth ? Does not this period of life, when passed in piety and innocence, procure us the most valuable advantages, and the noblest pleasures ? On the other hand, how many deplore the loss or abuse of these most favourable days of their lives, and bitterly lament over the unhappy consequences of youthful errors ? How many are there

who, in the flower of their lives, are a prey to the infirmities of a premature old age, become incapable of tasting the pleasures and comforts of domestic life, or to whom these pleasures are embittered and poisoned by remorse of conscience ?

And shall not these lessons and experiences, so proper to instruct and encourage me, make me more wise and prudent ? Shall they not engage me wisely to employ the days of youth ; to fly the steps of those unfortunate persons whose very appearance terrifies me ; to proceed with a firm and persevering step in the path where so many of my predecessors have reaped the advantages they now enjoy, and by which they have become valuable men, useful citizens, and wise and happy beings ?

The present is the season for sowing. If, at a more advanced period, I would not be reduced to the want of necessaries ; if I would not be a burden to myself and others ; if I would gather a rich and abundant harvest, I must sow the good seed, and carefully cultivate the ground which receives it. I must adorn my mind with wisdom, and my heart

heart with virtue ; I must lay in a store of useful knowledge, and early acquire the habit of acting justly. I must combat my evil thoughts before they gain the mastery ; I must extirpate my evil habits before they have taken deep root. I must endeavour to secure the love and esteem of my fellow-citizens, by a rational, modest, attentive, regular conduct, that I may be able to depend in future on their protection and support. Youth is the time for discipline and preparation : in this season I should acquaint myself with, and properly value, and exercise my faculties and powers, if I would one day employ them with facility and success ; I should acquire the information and the talents for which I shall have occasion in future life, and without which I shall stumble at every step, and find myself involved in a thousand perplexing difficulties. I must accustom myself to self-denials ; to bear contradiction and opposition ; to endure fatigue, trouble, and affliction ; to subdue my passions ; to conquer my sensual appetites ; if I would not one day sink

under the weight of every duty and every trial.

How important then is the present season of life! Mere wishes, slothful and feeble efforts, will not suffice to fulfil its duties and design. It is only by persevering endeavours, by a constant application, and by an unshaken firmness, that I can attain the end which I propose to myself. But need I be discouraged and alarmed at the necessity of diligence, application, and resistance? Will not the wages be proportioned to the labour, and the triumph to the combat?

Shall I postpone to an uncertain hereafter that which I can and ought to do at present? Is not the time I lose really lost for ever? Has not every future period of my existence its particular employment? Will it be the time for sowing when the season of gathering shall come, or for instruction when I shall be called to make use of my knowledge? What it is incumbent on me to do at this season, and which I neglect because of its difficulties, will become every year and every day more difficult. Notwithstanding the health and strength I enjoy in the spring of
life,

life, may I not lose my powers, and die in the flower of my days? And what doom may I expect in the future life, if I have foolishly wasted the prime of life in the slavery of irregular passions and of vice? I will watch continually over myself, over all the secret motions of my heart; I will not suffer myself to be seduced by the vain promises of vice, by the charms of an apparent liberty, or a treacherous joy. Wisdom raises her voice to tell me that the intoxication of sense endures but for an instant; that the enchanted cup of luxury shall not be always sweet to my taste; that the pleasure I find in drinking it shall soon vanish, as a fleeting dream from which we are fearfully awakened; that the liberty with which I am flattered by vice is nothing but the vilest slavery, and that all its joys are poisoned at their source. Whereas, no innocent pleasure which I forego, from a principle of virtue, shall be lost to me: sooner or later it shall be returned to me with interest. A train of pure and lasting joys shall recompence me, in manhood and old age, for the destructive or vain joys which I have prudently renounced. And

even when prevented, by an early death, from gathering, in this world, the fruits of a well-regulated youth, shall I not reap a prodigious advantage if I am prepared to enter a more perfect abode, and sufficiently qualified for the sublime employment and delicious pleasures which await me in a future existence?

Yes, O my God, it is only by keeping thy commandments---by making wisdom and virtue, reason and religion his faithful guides, that a young man can preserve his innocence, look with calmness on the beginning of his course, and advance nearer and nearer to his supreme destination. O may these faithful guides always accompany me in the journey of life! Oh Almighty and most merciful God, do thou thyself conduct me, by thy spirit, in the straight road. Preserve me, by thy grace, from the wanderings of youth and the tyranny of passions. Let thy wife and good Providence remove far from my path the obstacles and temptations which may occasion my fall. Assist my endeavours to become wise and virtuous, and accompany them with thy blessing. Place me in circumstances

cumstances favourable to my improvement. Give me faithful friends and guides, and enable me to follow them in the paths of wisdom and of virtue.

Thou delightest, Oh God, to grant the desires which flow from a sincere heart, and to second the efforts of those who seriously aspire after greater perfection. Supported and guided by Thee, I cannot fail of attaining in this world the design of my existence, and to obtain in the other my supreme end.

AN

EXERCISE OF PIETY,

FOR A

PERSON ARRIVED AT MANHOOD.

IT is through thy goodness, Oh my God, that I am brought thus far on in the journey of life—assist me to pursue it according to thy will, and happily to finish it. I am now arrived at the middle of my course. Exposed, at the meridian of life, to the rays of the burning sun, I no longer enjoy the freshness of the morning. The serene days of infancy and youth are fled away with all their playfulness and thoughtless gaiety. More serious thoughts, and more important occupations, accompanied with sollicitudes and fears, but also intermixed with nobler and more delightful pleasures, have succeeded them. The shoot, concealed beneath the
blossom,

bloſſom, appears, unfolds, increaſes, and produces fruit, which will ſoon arrive at maturity. I am now advanced to the height of manhood. My body and my mind have attained all the ſtrength of which they are capable : the torch of reaſon is lighted up in my mind, the fire of ſentiment is kindled in my heart, and my animal ſpirits communicate to all my members a manly and vigorous activity. The ſtrong feeling I now have of my exiſtence and my powers imparts the liveliſt ſenſations of joy, and fills me with fortitude and confidence. It is to Thee, O God, the giver and preſerver of my life, I owe this delightful feeling, this manly courage and aſſurance. May they excite me more and more to make a good uſe of my faculties and powers, and to diſcharge my duty with indefatigable zeal. I am now able to bear heavy burthens, to execute toilsome labours, to undertake things difficult and complicated, and overcome the greateſt obſtacles. The difficulties and dangers which terrify the young and the old man, need not diſcourage me. The obſtacles which make

them stumble and fall, ought not to stop me in my course.

A greater activity, more application, a more unshaken patience and fortitude ; these are the true characteristics of manhood ; these are the sources from whence I must draw the truest riches and felicity for myself and others. Far be from me all sloth and inactivity, all indulgencies and weakness, and the shame which accompanies an useless and effeminate life.

It is now time that I should make use of the knowledge and abilities acquired in youth. It is now that I should labour for society, and return the good offices I have, for so long a time, received from it. It is now that I should become to others, what my parents, instructors, and guides, have been to me.—The strength and well-being of the state are founded on the useful labours, and beneficial undertakings of those arrived at maturity.—It is for them to take care of those members of society who are yet young, feeble, and inexperienced ; and to procure rest, support, and recompences, to the respected old man, who has laboured for the public good. May

no employment, and no station, appear to me a burthen, which tends to this end.

May I never lose sight of the different ties which unite me to society, as a father, a citizen, a friend, a child of God, and a Christian. May I never allow in myself any desire, any undertaking, any discourse, any actions, inconsistent with these relations, and contrary to the public good. Though I make but a very small part of the society, though I occupy but a single place, and that, perhaps, but a very subordinate one, this does not put it out of my power to contribute to the welfare of that society of which I am a member. The public welfare can only take place when each of those who compose it worthily fills his station, and faithfully discharges his own peculiar duties. This shall be the object of my ardent and persevering endeavours. I would perform the duties of my function with a chearful heart, and disinterested views, uninfluenced by ambition, vanity, avarice, or the desire of power, but from obedience to thy will, and from a principle of conscience, and from motives of humanity, and the noble desire of attaining the design of my present existence,

existence, and of preparing for my future destiny. These are the motives which shall animate me in the discharge of my duty, and make that duty itself the source of pleasure and of joy.

The course I have yet to run appears long to me. I form, perhaps, great and extensive schemes. I employ myself in executing them with as much zeal and confidence as if I were sure of success. I labour for my country, for posterity, for a distant futurity. I plant, I build, I form enterprizes, I enter into new connections, I pursue various plans, I endeavour to enlarge the sphere of my activity, as if I had many ages yet to live. To act thus, is the will of thy providence, O God, which has so closely connected one generation with another, and which prepares, in the present time, the most distant events. It is for Thee, O thou Sovereign of the world, to determine (according to the purposes of thy infinite wisdom), whether I shall leave the execution of them to another. Thou wantest neither means nor resources to attain the ends Thou proposest to thyself. As for me, may it suffice to acquit myself well in my station, and to labour,

labour, with unceasing application, for the public good, without disquieting myself whether my life shall be long or short; whether the success of my enterprizes shall deceive my expectations, or crown my wishes.

But whilst my strength, ability, and success, answer all my expectations, I will never forget the frailty of my nature, the instability of worldly good, the uncertainty of all my schemes, the mortality of my body, and the immortal state into which I must pass.—Far from concentrating all my affections to the pleasures of this life, I would never lose sight of my supreme good. The improvement of my mind shall interest me more than any external good. I will prefer things invisible and eternal to those which are seen, and temporal; and I will always hold myself in readiness to quit my post, and to go into another world, where I shall attain all the improvement of which I am susceptible, and to prepare for which I was sent into the world.

AN

EXERCISE OF PIETY

SUITED TO

OLD AGE.

O my God, thou hast given me life, and continued it to me through a long series of years. After having carried me through the successive stages of existence, after conducting and protecting me in infancy, in youth, and manhood, thou hast brought me to the last period of life. How great, how innumerable are the blessings and favours thou hast heaped upon me! O thou supreme Good! with what paternal tenderness hast Thou provided for my bodily and spiritual wants, from my birth to the present hour! How many sources of pleasure and delight hast Thou opened to me in civil and domestic life!-- How many lessons of wisdom and virtue hast Thou

Thou given me! How many dangers hast Thou averted from me; from how many evils hast Thou preserved me! How many faults and sins hast Thou overlooked! How many undertakings and labours have I executed with success, through thine assistance!— Never—no, never have I been deprived of thy grace and presence. Thy mercies have been renewed to me every morning; every day, every hour of my life, have I witnessed to thy goodness. Accept, O merciful and indulgent Father, my most sincere and hearty thanks, for all the blessings thou hast heaped upon me, for all the support thou hast granted me, for all the divine joys thou hast poured into my heart, and for all the afflictions with which thou hast disciplined and benefited me. But how can I sufficiently acknowledge and celebrate thy paternal kindness, and my own felicity! Blessed be God, a day is approaching, when I hope distinctly to recollect all thy favours, and to be more sensible of their value. Then will the remembrance of my sufferings, as well as my pleasures, afford me joy. I shall acknowledge it was thy paternal

K

hand

hand which has guided me in the gloomy and the rugged, as well as in the bright and smooth paths of life, in order to conduct me in the surest way to felicity. Every day of my life has been marked by some precious effects of thy love. Through thy grace, I have been upheld under the troubles of life, discharged its duties, and tasted its pleasures. I can now quit my post without regret, and without fear. I have finished the work thou hast given me to do. I have promoted, according to my ability, the happiness of thy great family. Now I am going to rest from my toils, and to enjoy the fruit of my labours. Arrived at the end of my journey, what pleasure do I now enjoy in recalling to my mind every good action which Thou hast enabled me to perform. Happy, indeed, would it be for me, if there had been no actions, the recollection of which should cover me with confusion. In reviewing the course I have run, I perceive a multitude of faults and transgressions which fill me with shame and regret. If I can yet correct my errors, and in any measure repair the injury I have done
myself

myself or my fellow-creatures, I will do it without delay, and with the greatest alacrity, whatever shame it may occasion me, in order to restore peace to my mind before I quit this state of trial, and appear before my Judge. If I have neglected any duties, which I can yet discharge in my public or domestic relations, I will immediately fulfil them, lest death surprize me before I have compleated my task. My sins and transgressions would overwhelm me with sorrow, did I not, O my God, consider thy mercy. Thou wilt pardon my faults, for Thou art an indulgent Father to those who repent and amend. The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are the security and proofs of it. How full of consolation is this assurance! What light does it diffuse around me! What hope and trust does it inspire. I will constantly look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of my faith, my forerunner and my guide. With what calmness and fortitude did He encounter the terrors of death. I will endeavour to imitate his example, and tread in his steps. If I can be no longer useful to society by my labours, I

will try to be so by my example. My children, my servants, my descendants, shall learn from me to triumph over the fears of death, and to die as becometh Christians.--- An old man, who preserves to the decline of life an amiable serenity, and easy cheerfulness, who recalls to his mind the scenes of past life, without remorse, and who contemplates the future without fear, such an old man may still be useful to society. How much good may he do, how much evil may he prevent, by his advice, by his example, and even by his presence! The young, and those arrived at maturity, assemble around him to receive his instructions, to learn to live as he lived, and to approach the close of life with the same tranquillity of soul with which he meets his dissolution. What deep and lasting impressions may not the precepts, the experience, the exhortations, which are the fruit of a long life, make upon the minds of others. Oh that the torch of my life may burn with a cheering and salutary splendour, before it is extinguished, and leave permanent
and

and clear traces in the hearts of those who are younger than myself. To this end, I will endeavour to be free from the weaknesses and defects to which old age is usually subject. Far from me be all caprice, insensibility, austerity, moroseness, all peevishness, and impatience. May my principal, my last employment on earth, be to ease and lessen the care which my friends and others take of me, to testify to them my acknowledgments, to lead them, by my conduct, to respect and love the religion of Jesus, and prepare for its highest rewards. About to separate from them, I commit them, with myself, into thy hands, O Heavenly Father, with an entire confidence. Be a father to my children, and a friend to my friends. Take them under thy protection. Lead them in the paths of piety and virtue. Preserve them from foolish and hurtful lusts. Teach them to make a proper use of the *present* life, and to prepare for a *future*. Then, whatever be their lot, whether prosperous or adverse; whether they reach to my advanced age, or are cut off by

death, in the midst of their days, they will not be less happy, and will be finally united to me, never to separate or to die any more.

Thus would I finish my course. Thus would I spend the close of my life, relieving, benefiting, and blessing all around me. Then shall I behold my end with calmness and tranquillity. Death will conduct me to a better world, and will therefore be a messenger of joy. With a serene mind I shall go to a more perfect state, where I hope to know truth with greater certainty, to think more justly, to worship more devoutly, to love more affectionately, to act with greater freedom, and to enjoy pleasure without mixture or alloy. Yes, Oh my God, thou wilt quickly call me to thyself, and I will readily obey thy voice, for thou callest me to glory, honour, and immortality. Thy perfections are my security; and thy son Jesus Christ, whose words shall never pass away, gives me the most positive assurance of it.

With

With a heart deeply impressed with these sentiments, I will say as he did: "Father, not as I will, but as thou wilt. Into thy hands I commit my spirit."

THE SUBJECT.

IF mankind are placed in a state of mutual dependence; if they have different posts assigned them in society; if some, invested with authority and power, preside and govern, whilst others are controuled and obey; if every one is obliged, for the public good, to confine himself within certain limits, to submit to certain burthens, this arises from the diversity of our understandings, abilities, and talents, and the unavoidable effect of social life. However oppressive this difference of station may be to thousands of individuals, it is nevertheless necessary to the general good, and advantageous to the human race. Without this variety of conditions, how could the union, order, security, peace, and well-being
of

of society be maintained? How could the members of society make their faculties and talents useful to the public? How could they expand and exercise their powers, practice all the virtues of which they are capable, provide for their common wants, and execute useful undertakings? And how feeble, and destitute of succour should we be, without all social connection? Do not these connections and relations necessarily suppose a mutual dependence?

I here perceive, O God, thy wise disposal and arrangement. I revere and submit to them, fully convinced they are equitable and good; that they tend to promote the general welfare of thy earthly family, and, of consequence, my own private happiness.

Those to whom thou hast entrusted the administration of justice, the maintenance of laws, and the government of nations, are men of like passions with myself, and, on that account, frail and limited beings, a prey to error, and liable to failings; beings often as feeble, inattentive, and indolent, as myself; liable to be deceived, who are incapable of seeing, knowing, and executing every thing;
beings

beings who, with the best intentions, cannot do all the good they may wish, nor surmount all the obstacles they may encounter. I ought not to expect to find in them a wisdom and a virtue beyond what human nature is capable of. I must not be surpris'd if they often commit mistakes and faults; if their measures are not always so wise, nor so infallible, nor their administration so free from reproach as they might be, and if they sometimes oppress their inferiors and subjects, to how many more obstacles and difficulties, snares and dangers, are they exposed than others. How much do their education, rank, and the conduct of those about them, contribute to render the practice of virtue in them more difficult and arduous. Can I say, that were I placed in the same circumstances I should not be guilty of many greater faults, be more deficient in the duties of justice, equity and humanity, and more frequently prefer my own interest and pleasure to the general good.

All the arrangements and contrivances of mortals bear, and always will bear, the marks of human imperfection. If the advantages
and

and good they produce more than counter-balance the inconveniences and evils to which they expose us, I will thankfully enjoy the former, and endeavour to lessen the latter, by bearing them with patience. I will not forget that the obedience I owe to the magistrate is a duty which God himself hath commanded, the observance of which tends to the happiness of society, and consequently to mine, who make a part of it.

I will, therefore, respect my superiors, and lawful masters; and, whilst their laws are not contrary to the laws of God, who is my supreme Lawgiver, I will faithfully observe them, not from a motive of fear, but as the Gospel teaches me, from a principle of conscience, and a regard to the general welfare. My obedience shall not be that of a slave, but of a rational, free, and intelligent being, who acts from the unconstrained impulse of the mind. I will give to those who are exalted above me in authority and rank, the honours and respect to which they are entitled. But never will I debase myself before them, or flatter their vanity. Never will I treat them as beings of a higher species,

cies, or forget that they are by nature my equals. My thoughts, my words, my actions, shall be suited to the common nature I partake with them. If, in the station I fill, I can in any measure contribute to the general good of society, I will do it with alacrity and pleasure; and, when I am under no legal obligation, I will endeavour to give effect, according to my abilities, to the useful and salutary intentions of my superiors.

Far be it from me to envy the great and powerful. The places they occupy are as dangerous as they are exalted and brilliant. The path they tread is strewed with flowers, but these flowers most frequently conceal a multitude of briars and thorns, and stones of stumbling, from which my path is exempted. They have also their burdens to bear, burdens which are often more oppressive than mine.

Besides, whether my condition here be high or low, bright or obscure, it will not affect my eternal state. My future happiness will depend on the exactness and fidelity with which I shall have executed the task which Thou, O my God, hast given me. Whatever may be the station Thou hast been pleased to
assign

assign me, if I strictly endeavour to discharge its duties, it will pave the way to perfection and felicity. Grant me, O God, to this end thine assistance. Father of Mercies, teach me to do thy will, and to discharge my duty, with all the attention and zeal of which I am capable. Then shall I always enjoy thy approbation, and in whatever state I am shall learn therewith to be content.

THE
RICH MAN.

THE affluence in which Thou, O my God, permittest me to live, undoubtedly procures me great advantages, and a variety of comforts and delights. It preserves me from many occasions of painful anxiety; it opens to me many sources of pleasure and joy, which, without its aid, would have been shut against me. It excites me to a more generous activity for the public good. It furnishes me with a thousand means of augmenting my own happiness, and that of my brethren. Beneficent God! it is to thy sovereign goodness I am indebted for all these important advantages, and I return Thee my most grateful acknowledgements. O teach me to regard and employ my riches suitably to thy will and my own true felicity! May I never consider them as proofs of particular merit in myself, and of thy predilection

towards

towards me. How many of my brethren, plunged in the depths of poverty, are more wise, virtuous, and deserving of thy favours than I am! May I never, in future, estimate the value of riches by the share I have of them, but by the wise, noble, and serviceable use I make of them.

If my condition hath its pleasures and advantages, it hath also its inconveniences and dangers. How many snares surround the rich man! With how many pretences do riches furnish him for insolence, vanity, pride, effeminacy, luxury, and voluptuousness! What risks does he run of violating the most sacred laws, of forgetting God, of indulging his sensual appetites, of despising the poor, of oppressing the weak, of hardening his heart, of becoming insensible to the miseries of others? How many snares are laid for his innocence and virtue? Assist me, O my God, in the midst of these difficulties! Enable me to escape these dangers, and surmount all these obstacles to piety and virtue. Ah, if my riches would remove me to a greater distance from Thee, and lead me astray into the paths of vice and folly,
rather

rather take them from me. I would infinitely rather be poor and virtuous, than live foolishly and wickedly in the bosom of plenty.

Yes—if my riches are prejudicial to my spiritual enjoyment, to my truest happiness and the lasting felicity of my soul, then, O my God, give me fortitude to free myself from an uneasy burthen, by consecrating, whilst still living, a considerable part of it to support useful institutions; to assist the poor, and those of my friends who are in need; that the happy mediocrity to which I shall reduce myself by these generous sacrifices, may lessen the difficulties and obstacles which retard or mislead me in my course.

Although such a resolution may expose me to the ridicule of mankind, and lead many to tax me with weakness and folly, it is not the less a proof of a great and vigorous mind, and a more heroic and virtuous conduct, than the exploits of so many conquerors who ravaged the world and deluged it in blood.

At least I am persuaded, and will always recollect, that I have difficult duties to discharge,

charge, that it becomes me to take peculiar care to be on my guard against the false splendor of external good; to redouble my attention and vigilance over myself, and never lose sight of those ties which unite me to God and man; that by avoiding the snares which fortune spreads for me, I may walk with a firm and sure step on so slippery a road.

I will, then, inviolably observe the laws which reason and religion dictate. If, in the property I possess, there be any part of it which I have acquired unjustly, I would instantly restore it to its proper owner; or, if none such can be found, I would distribute it among the poor. How can I enjoy with satisfaction, and apply without shame and remorse to my *own* use, what is not mine but belongs to another.

Never will I make a parade of my riches before the eyes of others in such a manner as to humble or afflict them. Never will I boast of them as an advantage which advances me above them. Never will I despise the poor because they are poor. Never will I treat them with insolence and cruelty,

or forget that they are in many respects my equals and my brethren.

My acts of charity shall never be performed through vanity or ostentation. Far be it from me to reproach the poor man I relieve. He shall not be obliged to purchase my kind offices by humiliations and meaneſſes. I would never, in an offensive manner, remind him of the aſſiſtance he has received from me. A look that ſpeaks pity and affection doubles the gift, and makes the heart of miſery rejoice. My hand and my countenance, therefore, ſhall give together. Thus, when I am aſked for bread, I ſhall not give a ſtone along with it; and when I hear a fellow-chriſtian crying out with his Divine Maſter when expiring on the croſs, "Lo, I thirſt!" I ſhall not have the barbarity to mock his diſtreſs, and double his complaints, by giving him vinegar to drink mingled with gall. To do good in ſecret, without a witneſs, without hope of a return; to do it to thoſe who are ungrateful, and even to thoſe who are my enemies, what a divine pleaſure! It is to imitate thy bounty, Thou moſt benevolent of beings, and to be
merciful

merciful as Thou, my Father in heaven, art merciful.

Riches shall not be the rule by which I will estimate the merit of mankind, and determine the share they shall enjoy of my esteem. I know full well a person may be rich without any personal merit, and that poverty does not exclude the most valuable qualities. Did not Jesus Christ, the most perfect of mortal beings, the most perfect model of human perfection---did he not pass his life in the bosom of poverty and indigence? I will not place my affections on the goods of fortune, or consider them as essential to my happiness. What is there more fleeting and uncertain, and consequently less solid and lasting, than the contentment and happiness they impart? How uncommonly do we see a rich man contented and happy; and how many persons are both contented and happy without the assistance of wealth?

I will never consider the use I make of riches as a matter of indifference. It is my duty to employ them in a manner the most wise and beneficial to society; and it is

much more difficult to discharge this duty than is generally imagined. I will not leave a matter of this consequence to chance; and though in many cases I should pay regard to the circumstances of the moment, these circumstances shall not be my only rule. I will often reflect on the good I can do; I will advise with my most virtuous and judicious friends, and give the subject my closest attention and care. The poor, the sick, and the unhappy, have undoubtedly the first and most incontestible claim to my assistance. But I ought also to take in hand the cause of innocence, the interests of liberty, truth, virtue, humanity, and public happiness. These interests I ought to support and defend with so much the more courage and zeal, because I can do it with less risque and more success than others. This is my greatest honour, my most sacred duty, and my highest felicity.

Thus, shall I lay up treasure for futurity, become rich in good works, in generous sentiments, and virtuous actions. And though inevitably exposed to be one day deprived

deprived of temporal riches, I shall acquire others which shall last for ever, which even death itself shall not snatch from me, and which will open to me in the future world inexhaustible sources of blessings and joys.

THE
POOR MAN.

THOU distributeſt as it pleaſes Thee, Oh God, thy bleſſings amongſt men, according to laws ſupremely wiſe, but which are in a great meaſure unknown to us.—“ Thou exalteſt him that is low, and abaſeſt him that is high ; Thou makeſt poor, and makeſt rich ; Thou bringeſt low, and liſteſt up.” Nothing exiſts and takes place without thy permiſſion ; every thing is directed by thy univerſal providence. Let thy will be done, great God, for it is juſt and good.

Poverty ought not to quench my ſpirit, hinder me from enjoying the pleaſures of exiſtence, nor extinguiſh the ſenſe of the dignity of my nature. All that conſtitutes human nature ; all that exalts man above other terreſtrial creatures ; all that is eſſential to his true glory, and to his proper and laſting perfection, falls to my lot as well as

to the rich man. Have I not the same faculties, the same abilities, the same hopes, the same destination as he has? Have we not each of us the same relation to God, our Creator and Father, and to Jesus, our Lord and Saviour? Are we not to meet together before the same tribunal which is to decide our fate? Ought we not here to prepare ourselves for the same felicity? Can I think that Thou, O my God, lovest me the less because I am poor; and that my poverty will be an obstacle to my future and supreme happiness?—Undoubtedly not. Thou hast, perhaps, foreseen that affluence and abundance would be hurtful to me, that they would become fatal snares to my virtue; in this case, thy paternal bounty necessarily led Thee to refuse them to me. Possibly my indigence is a necessary means of preventing evils from which Thou wouldst spare me, or of procuring to my brethren, or the public, many considerable advantages, which ought to outweigh my own personal advantage.

I will never blush then at my poverty. That poverty, which is not the effect of bad conduct, is no disgrace to any one. It is of

no consequence to me to be esteemed by any one who would despise me only because I am poor. It is not the person such a man esteems or disregards, it is his dress and externals. Do I not also know that my indigence will not degrade me in the eyes of that Great Being who knoweth all things, whose judgment is infallible, and on whom alone my present and future happiness depend? Do I not also know that, in the eyes of every considerate person, an upright mind, and a sincere and honest heart, is of more value than all the silver and gold in the world? And if the wisest and most virtuous of mankind esteem me, may I not be unconcerned at the contempt of weak and foolish minds?

But if I have no occasion to be ashamed at my poverty, I ought not to seek to conceal my indigence from the eyes of others. It is by this that it becomes so oppressive and insupportable a burden to so many persons, who wish to appear different from what they really are, and to live like people who are in easy and affluent circumstances, without the means of doing it. Obligated continually to
differ-

dissemble and disguise, to speak and to act the reverse of what they think, such persons pass their lives under constraint and perpetual uneasiness. They only make themselves more contemptible in the eyes of all those who see through their ridiculous vanity, and deprive themselves of the esteem of those who regard merit more than fortune. It shall give me no uneasiness, then, to own my poverty in all cases wherein this acknowledgement will be necessary or convenient. By this means I shall free myself from a painful constraint, and from many troublesome shackles; I shall be at my ease; I shall live suitably to my condition, and with tranquillity on the little I possess. I can then, also, accept with gratitude, and without shame, the assistance which benevolent persons may be disposed to give me. But this avowal of my indigence shall always be accompanied with a proper sense of my natural dignity; it shall be the avowal of a man who knows how to value himself, who judges wisely of the worth of things, and who has learnt to be contented with his lot.

To

To support myself with dignity in the bosom of poverty, I must carefully avoid contracting habits which are commonly found in my condition, and falling into errors into which poverty so easily betrays us.

Far from me be the idea of making use of unlawful and disgraceful means of extricating myself from my indigence, or of acquiring riches: I should then lose the peace of my own mind, the esteem of good men, and the approbation of my God—then, indeed, I should deserve the contempt and disgrace which the prejudices and false opinion of the senseless have attached to my condition. Far from me be all those indecent and bitter complaints which poverty often utters against the dispensations of Heaven on the injustice and cruelty of men. By these I should offend my Creator and my Father, and exasperate my brethren against me.—By these I should encrease the difficulties I am involved in, and drive from me those who might be disposed to assist me.

Far from me be all envy at the sight of the real or imaginary advantages which riches procure. Far from me be the contempt and

hat:

hatred by which the poor seek to revenge themselves on the rich for the want of their fortune. Would not this be to pass judgment on the wise proceedings of Providence, to accuse an infinitely wise and righteous Being of injustice, and to open to myself the sources of affliction and disappointment? Far from me be that discouragement, those painful apprehensions, those anticipated uneasinesses to which the poor sometimes give way. Little is wanted for the support of a man who knows how to confine himself to simple necessaries, and who has shaken off the yoke of artificial wants. And hast Thou not, O my God, an infinite variety of means to relieve my wants and extricate me from my misery? If I make a prudent use of my abilities—if I labour with persevering zeal and activity, can I suspect Thou wilt ever forget and forsake me; that Thou wilt permit thy creature, thy child, to want what is necessary? Besides, how uncertain is that future period about which I distress myself!—how short and fleeting is the life of man? Why then should I give myself up a prey to inquietudes about distant events, which I
may

may never see? Why should I disquiet myself about what may never happen?

I will submit myself entirely to thy will, O God, as to that of the wisest and most tender of parents. I will build all my hopes on Thee, convinced that thy Providence will bestow upon me all that is truly necessary and advantageous to me.

All that happens is the consequence of the wisest arrangement of things. Thou directest and overrulest all things. The indigent condition in which I am placed undoubtedly tends to my own and others happiness, and will sooner or later promote thy great designs—designs of which I shall one day have a more perfect knowledge, and the wisdom and goodness of which I shall adore, though at present I am but imperfectly acquainted with them. However sharp and rugged be the road thou callest me to travel, it will bring me to the end I have in view with as much, perhaps with much more safety, than the straightest and the smoothest road. Full of filial confidence, therefore, O my God, I yield myself up to thy direction,
who

who wilt certainly conduct me to true happiness.

Am I not daily drawing nearer to a better life, where the poor shall no longer be eclipsed by the rich, nor the little trampled on and oppressed by the great—where all shall be tried by the Sovereign Judge of the universe and the Father of mankind, according to what they have done, and not according to what they have possessed—where every one will receive the rewards or the punishments he hath deserved. In that world those riches, which are here so much esteemed, will be of no value—There, those things only will be prized which may be shared equally by all men, the poor as well as the rich, and which cannot be taken from us. The less I have then of temporal riches the more I should strive to obtain those which are eternal. Happy shall I be, when I quit this world, if I carry with me a fund of wisdom, integrity, and virtue—a heart full of love to God and men. Then may I rejoice in the hope of not having neglected the design for which I was sent into the world. Then I shall be rich—rich in spi-

ritual and incorruptible blessings, which will always encrease and improve. O that, animated by these sentiments, I may labour with unwearied industry to acquire these invaluable and heavenly blessings.

This, O my God, is the only prayer I can address to Thee without restriction; convinced that what I ask is advantageous and useful for me, and that Thou wilt not fail to grant it me.

AN

EXERCISE OF PIETY

FOR

A PERSON CONFINED BY SICKNESS.

IT is in Thee, O my God, I live, and move, and have my being. Health and strength are derived from Thee. Thou dispenseth these blessings, like all other earthly blessings, as seemeth good in thy sight. As to myself, Thou hast favoured me less, in this respect, than many of my fellow-creatures around me. I feel it, and have often wept over it with regret; especially when the weakness of my body has lessened the activity of my mind, and prevented my contributing, according to my wishes, to the general good.

But I check every rising murmur, and say, with my heart, as well as with my lips, “not my will but thine be done.”

If

If my own excesses and wanderings in past life have produced that state of weakness in which I languish, it is just I should experience the pernicious effects of my ungoverned passions and senseless conduct. These effects are a salutary lesson to myself and others. Yes, O my God, even when Thou strikest I adore thy goodness, and acknowledge that Thou art the wisest Master and the tenderest Parent. Without these warnings and fatherly corrections I had continued to walk in the road of vice and folly, and thereby become still more wretched than at present.

But if the weakness of my constitution be not the effect of my own excesses, but the consequence of circumstances which have not depended on me, I ought to regard it as the result of thy wise arrangements—as the effect of thy universal providence, which concerns itself in the smallest as well as in the greatest events, and which makes all things work together for the accomplishment of its glorious designs.

These designs are indeed impenetrable by me; but I am persuaded they are as wise as they are salutary, and sooner or later I shall

see

see that they are so. Thou perceivest, at a glance of thine eye, the whole of my existence: Thou perfectly knowest all that I am and all that I shall become, in the present and the future state: Thou alone canst dispose of and order my lot so as best to conduce to my supreme felicity. And ought not this idea to calm and compose my mind?

But notwithstanding the narrow limits of my knowledge, I can, in many cases, perceive useful effects arising from the decay of my health. Even this condition may become to me a source of blessings; if, instead of giving myself up to murmuring and depression of spirit, I improve it as wisdom and religion direct.

Who knows but, if I had enjoyed a more established health, I might have become the prey of imperious and disorderly passions, and the slave of sensual appetites? I should then perhaps have yielded myself up to levity, to a taste for dissipation, to vanity, sensuality and luxury; and with more strength, I might have done much less good, and have

discharged the duty of my station with less zeal and sincerity.

Is it likely I should then have thought as frequently and with so much advantage as I have done on Thee, my God; on religion, the state of my soul, and a future existence? Would these thoughts have appeared to me so important as they now do? and would they have contributed so much to have made me better and more resigned, as they have done? At present the sense of my weakness engages me frequently to consider these objects, and renders them interesting to my heart, and a consolation to my mind.

Is it likely I should so well have known, tasted, and relished the innocent delights of domestic life, the noble pleasures of religion, and the attractive charms of virtuous friendship? Would my heart have been so susceptible of compassion and of pity? Should I have felt so lively an interest in the happiness of others? Might I not rather have become proud, insensible, and cruel?

Encouraged by a feeling of strength, might I not have deferred to an uncertain futurity the execution of things the most important,
instead

instead of being sensible, as I now am, of the uncertainty of life, and therefore improving the present moment with diligence?

How dangerous is uninterrupted health and a vigorous constitution! How prone are we to rely on our strength, and to sin under the idea of security. Into what excesses should we not run headlong without the restraints of sickness and suffering. Eager appetites, clamorous passions, hearken to no other call. The voice of reason cannot reach them. As full of suffering as the world is, men still find courage to be wicked; and the little of virtue that yet remains among us, is chiefly owing to this salutary discipline. Blessed calamities, that humble pride, that calm the passions, that curb each inordinate appetite! Blessed sicknesses, that meet the heart in its wanderings, and bring it back to Thee, the only centre of rest! Blessed disappointments, which afflict but purify—tear and harrow up the soul, but prepare it for the seeds of virtue.

Without this weakness of constitution should I have familiarized my mind to the idea of death, and been armed against its

terrors? Perhaps the most distant apprehension of my decease, the slightest forebodings of dissolution, had filled me with uneasiness and fear; and I should not have beheld, without distress and terror, the moment when my soul should quit this terrestrial abode.

If my present state of languor and weakness deprive me, on the one hand, of some corporeal pleasures and advantages—if it sometimes expose me to sorrow and sufferings; on the other hand it contributes to my internal and spiritual improvement: and this improvement is the only good thing which will follow me in the other world. What thanks do I owe Thee, O my Father, for the Gospel of thy beloved Son, which in this scene of suffering composes and enlivens my heart, with the certain prospect of a world where a body shall be prepared for me like to Christ's glorified body, not subject to weakness and pain.

What a motive is this to live contented and resigned, notwithstanding the daily feeling of my weakness!

No,

No, O my God, I will offer no inconsiderate prayer to Thee. I will not ask for health, but with great submission to thy will. Thou wilt always give me what is necessary to my true happiness. It is not for me, who am ignorant and blind, to prescribe what measure of health is fit for me.

If I cannot extend the sphere of my activity, I will at least endeavour, by thy grace, not to neglect any thing by which I can be useful. Far from me be all impatience and peevishness. I will endeavour to lessen the cares of my friends for me, and to express to them my gratitude for all the concern they shew me. The little good I can do I will do with all the zeal of which I am capable. Though weak, I am not entirely destitute of strength; and in the exertion of my remaining strength I shall not be wholly useless to the world. Thou requirest from thy creatures no more than Thou enablest them to perform. To be what Thou willest I should be; to perform what Thou willest me to perform; this is my duty, and my supreme felicity.

O, my God, let these considerations, so full of comfort, be never absent from my mind. Let them dispel the darkness of adversity, and influence all my sentiments and actions. I shall then never sink under the weight of my sufferings; I shall never cease, in the depth of my afflictions, to respect and love Thee as the wisest and the best of fathers, and resign myself entirely to thy disposal.

AN EXERCISE OF PIETY

ON THE

DEATH OF FRIENDS.

IT is Thou, great God, who hast united men together by the closest ties. It is Thou who hast in such various ways interwoven our interests, our pleasures, and our pains. Thou hast given us as assistants, conductors, guides and supports to each other. Thou hast inspired us with sentiments of love for one another. The tears, therefore, that we shed at the death of those who were dear to us, cannot be displeasing to Thee. It is thy will that we should love them, and thou beholdest thy children with an approving satisfaction when, answering to thy paternal views, they live in harmony and tenderly love each other.

But Thou wouldst have our love to be an enlightened and rational affection; that our esteem and attachment should be proportioned

to the Beings who are the objects of them. Thou designest that we should love that which is perishable and mortal as we ought to love such creatures; that we should reserve our supreme love and chief regard for Thee alone, an eternal and infinite Being, the only inexhaustible Source of all beauty and perfection.

The beloved persons whose loss I deplore were doubtless mortal. Taken from dust, they must necessarily return to it again; strangers upon earth, like myself, my parents, and my brethren, they must return to their own country. This is what I ought never to have forgotten—this is what I ought frequently to have repeated to myself, even in the moments when I was tasting the pleasures of their friendship; in this manner should I have regulated my attachment, and have prepared myself for a sudden and inevitable separation from them. So true is it that if we were more attentive to the paternal lessons thou daily givest us, we should have no occasion for instruction in the school of affliction and misfortune, which we might more easily learn from our own reflections.

The

The loss I have lately sustained is undoubtedly painful and affecting. The more intimate and sacred were the ties which united me to these dear friends, the greater strength and consistence time had given them, and the more habitual they were become to me, so much the more cruelly must my heart be torn at the moment the arrow of death hath just cut those beloved knots asunder, and the deeper and more painful will be the wound arising from them. But it is thus that all the ties which bind me to the earth will loosen and break away, that my passage from this world to another may not be too painful for me. Those whom I cordially loved have only preceded me a few steps. Very soon, perhaps sooner than I suspect, I shall follow them. Then the days and the years that I have passed in their absence will appear to me as a fleeting dream, to which will have succeeded the lustre of a beautiful day. Then shall I soon forget all the afflictions and all the pains of this short life, and I shall be recompenced by the enjoyment of a pure and lasting felicity. Then we shall find ourselves reunited with wife
and

and virtuous men in the assembly of the just made perfect in heaven. And if, to render our felicity compleat, it is necessary, as I can scarcely doubt, that we should know again the persons whom we here tenderly loved, and should enter into new and closer relations, Thou, O heavenly Father, wilt not deprive us of this sweet satisfaction. Yes, we shall then advance from one degree of improvement and felicity to another; and by imparting to each other, without the shadow of jealousy and envy, all our knowledge, our advantages and pleasures, we shall multiply them to infinity, and make the enjoyment of them more noble and delightful. Those friends whose loss I deplore have fought the good fight and finished their course, whilst I am yet obliged to struggle with difficulties here below. They have run the race and reached the goal, whilst I am still pressing towards it. They now rest from their labours, and their works have followed them. And shall I not rejoice in their victory and their rewards, their felicity and glory? Can I wish to see them re-enter the list, and begin anew their painful labours---

to see them again expose themselves to the dangers and the adversities of life.

No, dear departed friends! however I valued you here, however sensibly I feel your loss, I wish not to see you again struggling beneath the burthens of mortality. I hail your safe arrival on that blessed shore where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest.

Thanks be to Thee, O my God, who art their Father and mine, that thou hast sustained them in their combats, conducted them to the end, and introduced them to the enjoyments of the just. But, perhaps, like a forsaken orphan, I may be apt to consider myself as a solitary individual in the midst of a tumultuous crowd of joyful, busy men. Perhaps I have lost my principal support, my most generous benefactor, and my faithful guardian and guide. Alas! it is now that I most sensibly perceive my own weakness, dependence and insufficiency. It is now that I groan under the feeling of my wants; and every difficulty I experience, every danger I meet with, now fills me with fear and terror.

But

But am I really so forsaken and destitute of help as I imagine? How many wise and virtuous Christians are there in the world who are disposed to conduct the feeble and those who are destitute of help? Am I not, moreover, under the constant direction of thy providence, O thou Parent of mankind? Canst thou forsake any one of thy children who flies to Thee for refuge, casts himself into thy bosom, and humbly submits to thy will?

But it is thy will that I should exercise my powers and make greater efforts to improve in virtue. It is thy will that, no longer leaning on the support of others, I should walk alone in the journey of life; that I should be less influenced by the example of others than by my own principles; that I should accustom myself to think and act with more steadiness and consistency, that I may one day become to my brethren what those persons, whose loss I deplore, were to me. These are the reasons why thou hast taken from me these supports and left me to myself.

Teach

Teach me, O Lord, to do and bear thy will, and to draw instruction from the adversities of life.

Are they innocent children, the objects of my sweetest hopes, that death hath snatched from me?

Taken from this world in the age of innocence to pass into a more perfect abode, they are sheltered from the snares and temptations of the present life; they have escaped a thousand evils and a thousand dangers; and Thou wilt not fail to realize the hopes which they have raised by their natural dispositions, and by the excellent faculties with which Thou hast endowed them. Yes, Thou art their true Father, and wilt advance them much better than I could possibly do. Thou wilt conduct them with much more ease and safety to the end of their existence than the wisest and best of earthly parents could.

Is it the friend, the confident of my heart, whose death I lament? But was he not at the same time, and much more, the friend of God, and the friend of all wise and good men? And must not death have
extended

extended the sphere of his activity, ennobled his sentiments, and augmented his happiness? What a prospect for every one who is capable of a generous disinterested friendship!

Moreover, is not all friendship, founded in truth and virtue, in its own nature immortal? Is it not as immortal as truth and virtue? In separating virtuous friends death only purifies and exalts their friendship. Like a tree transplanted into a more fertile soil and milder climate, it shall flourish again beyond the tomb and bear immortal fruit.

When I moisten with my tears the grave of my friends, it is not for them but for myself I weep. It is only their *bodies* that lie in the tomb. Their immortal souls are returned to their Creator and their Father. Nothing that was great and good, and amiable in them---nothing that excited my esteem and love for them is perished. Their souls continue to think, and think with greater freedom and justness than ever. Their inclinations and sentiments are the same, excepting that they are more and more exalted and refined. Even to me their most excellent qualities are not lost. Often will I recal to

mind their precepts, their examples, their exhortations and advice, and from thence derive wisdom and instruction. Their image, deeply impressed on my heart, shall be often present to me; sometimes kindly to reprove me for my faults, and at others to encourage me in virtue. Possibly in a future life they shall again be my instructors and my guides, and instate me in the important and rejoicing employments which await me in the heavens. Yes, O my God, the friends of my heart belonged to Thee, and they will be eternally thine. Thou gavest them to me, Thou hast taken them from me, and blessed be thy Name.

FINIS.

LATELY PUBLISHED,

And Sold by J. JOHNSON, St. Paul's Church-Yard.

1. A Sketch of the Life and Writings of the Reverend
MICAIAH TOWGOOD.

By JAMES MANNING.

2. A SERMON,
Preached at Exeter on the late Fast, with the Devotional
Services of the Day.

(Published at the Request of the Audience.)

By the Same.

3. A SERMON,
Delivered before an Assembly of Ministers at the Opening
the New Meeting at Bridport, and published at their
Request. Second Edition.

By the Same.



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY
Los Angeles

This book is DUE on the last date stamped below.

APR 24 1964
REC'D MLD
LIBRARY
MAR 24 1964
5

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY



AA 000 092 082 7

YR

